The Soul of India

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PART IV   INDIA AND THE WORLD

Introduction

TWO previous volumes, *The Coming Caesars* and *The Soul of China,* have laid the foundations of a comprehensive philosophy of history in several volumes which includes in its compass a study of all human societies, past and present. This work on India is the third volume in this series and, like them, concentrates on the study of a particular civilization. It attempts to do for India what *The Soul of China* did for the Far East; and since the same philosophic interpretation was applied to both, and since their time spans roughly coincide, we can do no better than to repeat, more or less, what has already been expounded in the introduction to the preceding volume.

There has always been something wrong in the intellectual approach of Westerners toward India. Caught in the tight web of their own specific problems, trapped by their own intellectual snares, imprisoned within the narrow vista of their own peculiar outlook on the world, the Westerners have seen of India only what they wanted to see—and still do today. Quite unconsciously, they looked at India in a subjective way and inevitably made two fundamental and related mistakes. On the one hand, they were unwilling to look for a comprehensive and *objective* philosophy of history which might determine the great similarities existing between the historical evolutions of India and the West—and of all civilizations, for that matter. They were thus unable to determine at what stage of their evolutions both India and the West had arrived. Yet it was obvious that an India that was old when Alexander the Great invaded its fringe had already gone through the same stages of cultural development through which the West itself was proceeding two thousand years later, and in the same sequence. Thus, one aspect of the Indian problem which Westerners chose to ignore was the point of intersection

at which both India and the West, following their specific historical courses, met when the first Europeans landed on the coast of Malabar. And then, on the other hand, they more or less felt unwilling to see the unique, original and utterly incomparable features of Indian civilization. Some Westerners, repelled by the more gruesome aspects of Hinduism, saw in India only a conglomeration of pagan sects addicted to the most barbaric customs; others, with a more or less pseudo-mystical bent, saw in India the land of eternal wisdom and the fount of a world-wide spiritual revival of the future. Nowhere was there an attempt to look at India from both angles at once, to see objectively that Indian history conformed to a definite pattern of history but that, at the same time, Indian civilization had a unique personality of its own and could not be judged by our standards.

From this initial misreading of the past sprang all the other misconceptions. A great myth arose among Westerners watching the oceanlike uniformity of a static Indian civilization which never seemed to be stirred by the slightest breeze, whereas dynamic Europe was perpetually in the throes of convulsions—the myth of the "timeless East," a sluggish giant who was forever condemned to follow clumsily in the wake of Western progress. What the West failed to understand was that India, as well as China, had long since passed the point at which Europe and America were arriving in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As a self-contained, self-enclosed and autonomous civilization India had *completed* her historical cycle, whereas the West was not even halfway through. The dramatic misunderstandings of the past and the present were the inevitable outcome of this mental blindness.

So long as the West itself refuses to revise its own philosophic approach to take into account all the other civilizations and, somehow, explain them all and relate them to some basic principle of historical evolution, there is no real possibility of understanding India. But if we undertake a comparative study of all civilizations known to history, we will see that there is some mysterious inner logic to these analogous growths of social organisms, some spiritual plan which unfolds itself through the process of historical evolution. It then becomes clear that contemporary India is by no means emerging from some dark, medieval feudal age which happens to be centuries behind modern times but, on the contrary, is historically far beyond. India does not suffer from *arrested* growth but from *terminated*

growth—such a termination as the West itself might well experience if the lessons of the past are not heeded.

We therefore have to find some guide, some connecting thread which will show us both the similarities and the differences between India and the Western world. A philosophy of history is what we need—an effort to find trends and patterns which are as common to all civilizations as physiological phenomena are to all human beings, however unique and wholly original they may be in other ways.

The essence of history does not reside in recorded facts but in the thoughts, emotions and ideas of the human beings who have made it—which has great bearing on the interpretation of Indian history, since it is extremely poor in factual evidence but rich in literature and philosophy. Facts are only the outer shell, the crystallization and materialization of ideas and emotions. History is life itself and, like everything else that is alive, it has both a *cyclical* rhythm and a *linear* tension. This linear unfolding of history—the Industrial Revolution, scientific progress and such—is familiar to us because we keep our eyes glued to it; we are today overwhelmed by it and tend to overlook the cyclical rhythm that is still operating as vigorously as ever. This cyclical pulse shows us a definite pattern of recurrences which is clearly visible in the development of all human societies: they are born, they grow and they die—and often enough they are followed by other societies in formation, feeding off their rotting corpses like maggots—the Persians in Babylon, the Classical Greeks in Egypt, the Germanic hordes in the Roman Empire, and of course, closer to our present topic of interest, the Aryans in the Indus Valley. What we have to discover is the grand cycle of history, that which takes into account the whole of a particular society's life—its arts, sciences, techniques, religions, philosophies, politics, economics, all of which are intimately connected and interrelated. It has to be all-inclusive.

The great cycle which has been in evidence throughout history like a giant wheel of destiny revolves around the sequence leading from *Culture* to *Civilization*. Those two familiar words we are now going to use in an unfamiliar fashion: in the periodic sense of youth followed by maturity, in the sense of organic succession. Instead of coinciding in time with one another, Civilization follows and fulfills the Culture which was tending toward it during the life span of a particular society. In this sense, each organic society has "its" own Culture and "its" own Civilization.

Culture is the state of being of a young society awakening to new life, a society which is often the result of the rape of old, decadent, overcivilized people by dynamic barbarians. This society is born when the fusion between the old and the primitive is more or less completed—as it was in Western Europe after the last Norse barbarians had been digested or in India when the last Aryans became fully integrated in the new Brāhmanic society. The result is an entirely new outlook on the world and, therefore, original creation in every field of human activity—religious, artistic, intellectual, political. Culture is essentially trail-blazing.

Culture is a pulsating organism endowed with immense flexibility and vitality, in a state of constant, irrepressible growth. Civilization, on the other hand, is the rigid crystallization of a particular society; it is the unavoidable horizontal tread on history's stairway, the inevitable pause of a society whose creativity has been exhausted by its cultural growth and which seeks to digest, duplicate, spread and distribute mechanically the output of its parent culture. Culture lays the emphasis on the original and unique, Civilization on the common and general: they are respectively the Greek and the Roman ideals.

The following work will show how, under this new system of reference, the West came into contact with India and how India reacted under the impact. But it should be emphasized that, like wheels within wheels, smaller cycles operate within the broad cycle just outlined. This will illustrate more particularly a phenomenon that has been taking place in India in the twentieth century—the gradual reawakening of the old slumbering soul of India and its impact on contemporary history. Like every old civilization still represented on this globe, India has been and is increasingly, in spite of appearances, returning to its original sources.

Now, as to the structural form of this work. The application of this philosophy of history to India results in a thorough study of the two extremites of Indian history's time span—the formation and development of Indian Culture and the establishment of Indian Civilization, before the Christian era, and the convulsions of India under the impact of the West in the past hundred and fifty years. The two thousand-odd years which stand between these two epochs—Indian Civilization proper—are only briefly surveyed. This emphasis on the two extremities of Indian history's time span underlines the twofold purpose of this volume: first, to illustrate with the help of a survey

of ancient India the similarities existing in the development of all human Cultures, as well as the profound psychological differences which separate them; along with this, to point out the problems faced by and solutions worked out by Indian Culture and Civilization in countless fields—problems very similar to those we face today, and solutions which we might well have to adopt in order to solve them. The second purpose is to explain modern India against the background of Indian culture and psychology, to analyze the contemporary development of Indian society and thought within the framework of this philosophy, and to throw some light on the future of India.

This volume is divided into four parts, the first one of which presents the full and autonomous Indian cycle as it evolved from Culture to Civilization. The titles of the other parts—"India and Asia," "India and Europe," "India and the World"—illustrate the fact that history has a linear as well as a cyclical development—technological progress, which made possible the ever widening contacts between alien civilizations, which brought India into contact with the Middle East and Southeast Asia, then China and the Arab, Persian and Turkish realms, eventually with Europe, and finally America and the whole world in a succession of broadening historical cycles.

If any geometrical figure can best illustrate the pattern of man's historical development, it is the *spiral*. Although separate human societies undergo similar growths in the same organic sequence, they do so on ever higher levels of cultural and technical developments. They ascend a figurative spiral rather than follow a straight ascending line (as assumed by our orthodox historical teaching) or run around in more or less disconnected circles (as assumed by the pessimistic proponents of cyclical theories). It is to this linear development that we owe the successive clashes between autonomous cyclical developments throughout history—and that we owe the momentous and multiple clashes of today.

A short introduction such as this one can barely outline a philosophy of history. A great deal more of it will become clear as the history of India unfolds—and as it is contrasted with the analysis of China and the modern West worked out in the two preceding volumes mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. We can do no better at this stage than remind the reader of Whitehead's famous remark, which underlies this whole philosophy of history: "Life is

an offensive against the repetitive mechanism of the universe." Significant history is the record of the development of life toward higher forms. It is up to us to understand the obstacles placed in its path by these repetitive patterns in order to be able to overcome them.

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PART I

THE MAKING OF INDIA

I

Pre-Aryan Civilization

LIKE China, India is an immense subcontinent in its own right, almost as isolated from the rest of the world by towering mountain ranges rising out of impenetrable jungles and soaring up to eternal snows—a huge wall, known in the past as Himavat, stretching like a bent bow from Baluchistan to the wooded valleys of upper Burma. Here was no mere mountain range like the others. The Himalayas must have seemed to the Indians of thousands of years ago like a colossal outburst of cosmic anger throwing up tiers of towering peaks on top of one another or, in another mood, what the great poet Kālidāsa called the "massed laughter" of the god Śiva.

A mental fog has concealed until very recently the remote history of this part of the world; even now, it is only partly dispelled. We are aware at least that about five thousand years ago a full-fledged Civilization was firmly settled in the area of modern Sind and the Punjab, in the broad plains and valleys of the lower Indus River—in those days a far more fertile region than today, with much heavier rainfalls and dense forests. Unlimited supplies of timber were available to the refined and sophisticated populations of what is known as the Harappā Civilization. This great Civilization was preceded by a Culture of which we know little, widely dispersed over scattered areas of Baluchistan's small valleys. In Quetta, Amri-Nal, Kulli and Zhob, to mention only the most important, the remains of small settlements have already been unearthed; in all likelihood, they were separate political entities linked together by a common cultural development, very much like Classical Greece. Baluchistan's hill country was not a favorable terrain for political centralization and uniformity, no more than Greece's was. And, as has always happened in recorded history, the succeeding Civilization was bound to shift its center of gravity to a contiguous area—the broad plains of the Indus

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—where these Civilization characteristics could find a more favorable geopolitical environment.

Let us now listen to the voice of archaeology; let factual archaeological research present its evidence unhampered by preconceived ideas, and we shall see to what extent the whole evolution of the Harappā Civilization conforms to the usual historical pattern. First of all, before we leave the pre-Harappā Culture, we must remember that "the variety in styles and techniques among the products of the Baluchistan communities . . . permits us to visualize the existence of little peasant states, each more or less self-contained, within a natural area such as the Zhob Valley, or those of the Kolwa and Maskai. . . . there is no evidence of any uniform arbitrary standards accepted or imposed throughout the territory."[1]

But, as Civilization overcomes Culture,

these very Amri settlements are succeeded by those of folk whose allegiance is not to a petty state but to an empire. Diversity is replaced by uniformity over an area incomparably vaster than anything we have yet seen in prehistoric India; a complete agreement in details of material culture is found over an area stretching from the Makran coast to Kathiawar, and northwards to the Himalayan foothills: a huge irregular triangle with the sides measuring 950 by 700 by 550 miles. From end to end of this territory, from some forty settlement-sites, come pottery vessels of identical mass-produced types; houses are built of baked bricks of standard dimensions; stamp seals are used engraved with similar scenes and a uniform script, as yet unread; a standard system of weights is recognizable. While some sites are villages, others are small towns, and 350 miles apart stand two cities, each covering at least a square mile of ground, twin capitals of an empire. To a British archeologist the inevitable parallel is the Roman Empire.[2]

This gigantic empire, twice the size of Old Kingdom Egypt, seems to have had two enormous metropolises: Harappā in the north and Mohenjo-daro in the south.

Thus, in the third millennium B.C. we have in northwest India a huge Universal Empire encompassing large slices of modern Baluchistan, Sind, and the Punjab. All the evidence points to a high degree of standardization and organization, implying strong centralization with full control over production and distribution, and probably a highly efficient system of taxation. The twin capital cities were

laid out to a common ground plan and were roughly contemporary, although a transfer of the seat of government from one to the other is a distinct possibility. Towns were no longer laid out for military defense as in the old pre-imperial days—undoubtedly because a universal Roman type of peace prevailed throughout the "civilized" world of those times. The extremely advanced stage of standardization indicates the existence of a universally accepted commercial code and uniform technique of production controlling the sizes of bricks, the capacity of pots, and so on. Agricultural output was under municipal control, and huge granaries similar to those of the contemporary Egyptian Civilization dotted the landscape. For centuries street-frontage regulations were strictly observed.

The amazing efficiency of the Harappā Civilization was linked to a depressing utilitarianism and a remarkable cultural stagnation. Its uniformity was expressed in time as well as in space. There were at least nine phases of rebuilding at Mohenjo-daro, and all indications are that there was no change in the people's way of life. The script, with its 270 characters, essentially hieroglyphic as in contemporary Egypt, remained identical throughout the entire period. This urban and literate Civilization, known to us only in its mature form, was undoubtedly the heir to the Culture whose scattered remnants are strewn over Sind and Baluchistan.

Who were the men dwelling in the Harappā Empire? We have evidence of two main racial strains: the first, and probably the dominant one socially, belonged to the long-headed "Mediterranean" type which spreads from Spain to India. The second belonged to the "Australoid" group with their thick lips and coarse noses, probably the original natives of the land. If we add some brachycephalic "Alpine" types and the Mongoloid hill people of the Himalayan foothills, we already have a complex ethnic situation where white, brown, dark and yellow races lived side by side within the compass of a great cosmopolitan Civilization. But the majority must have belonged to a stock very similar to the modern dark-skinned Dravidians of southern India.

The colossal size of the capital cities reminds one of Imperial Rome. The sheer size of the Citadel, the impressive Great Bath, the Collegiate Building, the Pillared Hall, all these great monuments indicate that Mohenjo-daro was a center of religious and administrative life on a grand scale. The city itself, with its countless shops and residential districts, was laid out like a gridiron of large avenues cut-

ting each other at right angles, dividing the city into large rectangular blocs. The large houses of the wealthy were provided with doormen, elaborate bathrooms, and rubbish chutes running through the outside walls into bins probably cleared by the municipal authorities. A complex drainage system under the streets was connected with the house drains. There seems to be no doubt that the general standards of health and sanitation were remarkably high. Large sections of the town were laid out for the workers; depressingly uniform rows of cottages lined narrow streets. Massive wooden mortars, large granaries, metalworkers' furnaces, everything suggests a high degree of semi-industrialization. In fact, archaeology claims that "to the Harappā Civilization we must presumably attribute the first really organized industry in Western Asia."[3]

The arts and crafts were the typical products manufactured for the use of mercantile classes, essentially utilitarian, without real artistic value, the typical products of a Civilization as opposed to the aesthetic, spontaneous products of a living Culture in full growth. In the words of an archaeologist, they were on the "dead level of bourgeois mediocrity"; and he adds: "The dead hand of conservatism in design, rather than in technique, lies heavily on all the Harappā products. Complex technical processes were known, well understood, and admirably organized for production, but the output suffered from standardization and an almost puritanical utilitarianism."[4] It is highly probable that "sterile" would be a better adjective than "puritanical."

Little is known about the Harappā religion, although archaeological research suggests the widespread cult of a Mother Goddess—undoubtedly the direct ancestor of the Grāma-Devatās who are still worshiped in countless Indian villages to this day and whose priests are outcastes, remnants of the pre-Aryan populations of India. Archaeological excavations have also found prototypes of the future god Śiva seated in the position of a *yogi,* as well as evidence of phallic worship. And, most important of all, the Harappā people *buried* their dead, the symbolic gesture of men concerned with *duration,* like the Chinese or the Pharaonic Egyptians—and in sharp contrast to the succeeding Aryans.

And so, for almost a thousand years, more or less from 2700 B.C. to 1700 B.C., this great Civilization flourished in relative peace. But like all Civilizations, it seems to have become completely sterile and ossified as time streamed by. Even technologically, it became back-

ward. Although Harappā men were at the time the sole inventors and users of saws with undulating teeth, although they made ample use of copper and bronze, they did not know iron; and whereas from the third millennium onward Mesopotamians knew how to fashion tools with sockets for handles, Harappā ignored this technical revolution. Harappā, it seems, had not domesticated the horse. Inevitably, this great Civilization was at the mercy of barbarians who were technologically more advanced. When those barbarians appeared, sometime in the first half of the second millennium B.C., on the northwest passes of Lak Phusi, the Bolan and the Gaj Valley, the great Civilization of Harappā collapsed for all time and faded from the memory of man until archaeology began to unearth its impressive remains in the twentieth century A.D.

II

The Dark Ages:
The Coming of the Aryans

THE Harappā Civilization came to a brutal end sometime be-
fore the middle of the second millennium B.C. At a time when a vast
Völkerwanderung was sending droves of Aryan tribesmen stream-
ing out of their original Central Asian home down to Mesopotamia
and up to the Iranian highlands, cousins of these Aryan tribesmen
began to wend their way across what is now Afghanistan and soon
stood on the Kirthar Range, looking down on the vast plains of the
Indus with its great cities, accumulated wealth, fertile lands, warm
climate and large populations of sophisticated city dwellers who were
totally unprepared for military defense. There was nothing to stop
the Aryan war bands as they poured down into India.

The most striking feature of the great contrast between the Aryan
barbarians and the civilized populations of the Indus was the tech-
nical superiority of the barbarians. Their tools and weapons were
far more effective; they knew iron, whereas the civilized Harappāns
did not. But the psychological differences, the perennial differences
between barbarian and civilized, were even greater. The vigorous,
healthy Aryan barbarians—close to nature, unintellectual forces of
the wilds, true beasts of prey, with unbroken will and exuberant vi-
tality, thirsting for power and plunder—hurled themselves on the
civilized men of the plains, men whose vitality was flickering faintly
like the flames of dying candles, men who were probably peaceful
and gently depraved, who were certainly too highly sophisticated to
take the wild Aryans seriously. The differences may or may not have
been in the greater physical strength of the barbarians; but it was
certainly, as it usually is, in the far greater *psychical* strength of men
who were utterly fearless and had nothing to lose.

Archaeological research reveals that portable objects soon began to replace those of permanent use in the Harappā Empire. Jewelry was boarded, a sure clue to the insecurity of the times. The assaults of the barbaric Aryans on the overrefined urban communities of the Indus gradually destroyed their cities, wrecked their complex social and political organizations beyond repair, made short shrift of their administrative efficiency and debased their standard of living. Cities were looted and burned to the ground, and wholesale massacres probably took a terrible toll of the native population. Rape and intermarriage between conquerors and conquered undoubtedly followed.

It seems that in every respect the Aryans behaved toward the Harappā Civilization as the Teutonic barbarians behaved toward the Roman. In fact, if we can visualize the fate of Imperial Rome under the heel of the Visigothic hordes of Alaric, we have probably a fairly accurate picture of Harappā and Mohenjo-daro under the occupation of the invading Aryans. Civilized standards collapsed swiftly; buildings crumbled and fell apart, new constructions were shoddy, regulations for street frontages were no longer observed, rooms became smaller and housed a much larger number of people. Brickwork became careless, streets uneven, pavements torn up, residential areas turned into slums, everything pointed to a steady breakdown of Civilization. And in the midst of the spreading ruins of deserted cities, the wooden huts of the barbarian squatters mushroomed. Pine and bamboo replaced brickwork. As in Mesopotamia, where the terrified scribe of the Third Dynasty of Ur described their own barbaric invaders as "a host whose onslaught was like a hurricane, a people who had never known a city,"[1] the decadent people of Harappā probably watched helplessly as the complex social and technical structure of cosmopolitan city life collapsed. It was the end of urban life in India for many centuries, the beginning of Dark Ages such as those that were to afflict Western Europe twenty centuries later under the Merovingian barbarians.

With the arrival of the Aryan war bands, all historical evidence vanishes; script disappeared, and the wooden structures of the Aryans rotted away in time without leaving any traces. From the very first, the invaders manifested the most remarkable trait of Indian psychology: a complete, instinctive indifference to history and the preservation of historical records. The Aryans in India had no mem-

ory. And instead of historical treatises such as the Chinese have left to posterity, the Aryans left us *myths*—the transmutation of *time-bound* historical events into *timeless* tales in which fact and fancy are almost inextricably mixed. So that we are left with the Aryans' first great literary work, the *Rg-Veda,* as the unique source of information for this dark period of India's history—and with the tools of a modern psychoanalyst.

In length, the *Rg-Veda* approximates the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* combined. Like them, it is the hymnic expression of a "Homeric Age"; it is a colorful and priceless document on the wars between Aryan invaders and native dwellers of the Indus region, but seen exclusively from the Aryan viewpoint. It is entirely compatible with the meager evidence drawn from archaeological sources and, read between the lines, gives a fairly comprehensive picture of these Dark Ages although it presents us with no historical *facts*. It merely gives us the atmosphere of this epic era, with a wealth of hymns, chants, prayers and exhortations, songs and magic spells, sometimes sublime and sometimes childish. The picture which emerges from a careful scrutiny of the *Rg-Veda* is more or less as follows:

The tall, fair-skinned Aryan barbarians emerged into the broad plains of the Indus mounted on horses, clad in heavy coats of mail (*varmīnah*), with weapons made of iron and military equipment which the refined men of Harappā obviously did not possess—proving perhaps for the first but certainly not the last time that barbarism and technical superiority are perfectly compatible. Looking down contemptuously upon the dark-skinned, flat-nosed Dasyus, the decadent descendants of those men who had created the Harappā Civilization, the victorious Aryan tribes (Bharatas, Yadus, Anus, Druhuys, Pūrus, etc.) gradually occupied a large part of Hindustan as Goths, Visigoths, Lombards, Franks and Vandals were to overrun the Roman Empire two thousand years later. Indra, the great god of the *Rg-Veda,* is first and foremost a destroyer of "forts" (*pur-amdara*), a wrecker of cities who "rends forts as age consumes a garment."[2] He is the barbaric god of loot, destruction and fire:

> . . . in kindled fire he burnt up all their weapons
> And made him rich with kine and carts and horses,[3]

sings the Vedic bard. We hear of the fierce struggles between the Aryan chieftain Divodāsa and the Dasyu ruler Sambara, of the alliance between two rival Aryan tribes, the Bharatas and the Pūrus, led

by the latter's redoubtable king, Trasadasyus, the "terror of the Das-yus."

The hymns undoubtedly reflect the feelings of victorious and war-like barbarians now masters of a huge fertile land and a cowed local population. The heroes are the Kṣatriyas, the barbaric warriors whose god is the fierce Indra and who fight from their war chariots with bows and arrows, followed by large tribal retinues, foot soldiers, "hand-to-hand fighters." The priests, medicine men or sorcerers, are completely subordinate to the warriors in Vedic times.

Where historical records are nonexistent, as in the case of Vedic India, modern man is entitled to postulate that social evolution in a given society conforms to the general pattern. We are faced in the present case with the juxtaposition of an old civilized population and a new race of invaders organized along tribal lines. It is safe to assume that in all such cases societies evolve from *tribal* to a *feudal* organization.

The hallmark of all Dark Ages is the gradual and often chaotic emancipation of the leading barbarians from the *tribal* obligations and traditions which rule all primitive people—such as the Aryans upon their invasion of India. Tribal chieftains and princes of the Dark Ages engage in a relentless struggle to free themselves from the tribes' public control. They no longer submit to the obligations of kinship, and replace their kindred followers by freely chosen clients who pledge personal loyalty to them and to no one else. It is mainly this collapse of the strong bonds of tribal kinship and its replacement by an entirely new social pyramid of interconnecting loyalties that give rise to this new social structure known as *feudalism*. Politically and socially speaking, a great Culture never develops out of kin relations but rather out of an *escape* from kin relations.

To this evolution of the invading barbarians' social structure must be added the simultaneous evolution of the old civilized society which has fallen under their domination. With the collapse of the old em-pire and of the political centralization that went with it, with the breakdown of the imperial bureaucracy goes an attempt at social and political reorganization on a *local* level. This reorganization takes place even if there is no substantial barbarian invasion (the spontaneous decomposition of the Roman Empire *before* the actual barbarian invasions is a perfect example). Obsolete institutions of former civilized times are swept away, local governments take over

everywhere, public authority becomes a private possession. Wealth (landownership, usually), military power and political authority gravitate into the hands of vigorous lords who rule their small territories and attract the spontaneous allegiance of vassals and the spontaneous submission of local farmers in search of protection.

Feudalism is truly born when these two social evolutions coalesce, when the former barbarian tribal leaders and the civilized landlords and magnates, the warlike conquerors and the social leaders of the conquered merge socially—that is, through intermarriage between their offsprings. And that is precisely the time when a new Culture comes to birth, the result of the cross-fertilization of two life units. In the present case, there is little doubt that just as the Teutonic warleaders and the post-Roman landlords eventually merged in Carlovingian Europe, the Aryan chieftains coalesced with the post-Harappā magnates to form the structure of a new feudal order. Political authority became monopolized by small groups of warlike Kṣatriyas who ruled individually their small territories. Government was thoroughly decentralized, effective only on the local level. Power was shared equally among lords of equal rank but exercised individually within their domains, and often delegated to inferior vassals on a still more local level. The chief characteristic of such a feudal order is a sharp division of labor, division between fighting man (conqueror) and farming man (conquered); and then as, a few centuries later, *feudalism* evolves into *aristocracy*, between political man and economic man.

In the great pulsating beat of history, this collapse of a decadent Civilization and retrograde movement toward local autonomy with all that it implies—the end of city life, the destruction of large-scale manufacturing, the collapse of great trade currents, the predominance of agriculture—represents an instinctive search of a new and young society for new roots in Mother Earth. In Vedic India, all this is quite plain. The whole atmosphere, lavishly depicted in great epics like the *Mahābhārata,* is one of medieval chivalry: the sacredness of the right of sanctuary, the generous hospitality, the warlike feelings, the courtesy toward women, the tournaments and games, the whole colorful pageantry of a Medieval Age which seems to be the exact replica of those of Homeric Greece or Gothic Europe.

We can vaguely see the outline of this feudal organization as it took shape in Vedic times. Although we have no positive proof that they were feudal fiefs, the political units known as *grāma, vis* and

jana constituted the cells of this new polity. The *grāmaṇī*, lord of the *grāma*, was usually a mere Vaisya and therefore certainly a vassal of the *vispati* and *gopā*, respectively lords of the *vis* and the *jana*, who were almost always Kṣatriyas. Over and above this feudal structure, Vedic India was split into an unknown number of independent states (*rāshṭra*) ruled by kings (*rājah*). Although the chronological sequence of the social and political evolution is nowhere indicated in the *Ṛg-Veda*, it is highly probable that kingship, weak and elective at first, must have become hereditary and increasingly powerful as time went on. These rulers were soon surrounded by a rudimentary officialdom and possessed small armies in which the foot soldiers (*patti*) recruited from the populace were sharply distinguished from the helmeted and armored knights (*rathin*) who fought from chariots and were of noble, that is, Aryan descent. In the early days, the Aryan barons checked the power of the *rājahs* through their assemblies (*samiti* or *sabhā*) and, probably like France's States-General, these assemblies must have been discontinued later when the power of the royal rulers became more autocratic.

The *Ṛg-Veda* gives us many glimpses of the social life of those times. Life was almost exclusively rural; the great cities of the Harappā era had as completely disappeared as the Roman cities in Carlovingian Europe. The very word "city" (*nagara*) is never even mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda*. The most powerful feudal lords lived in their *purs*, medieval forts which were often used as refuge for the surrounding population. War and agriculture were the main occupations of the times even though there was a certain amount of trade. But, significantly, commerce, probably a small-scale remnant of the great trade of Harappā days, was in the hands of the despised, non-Aryan Paṇis.

The Indo-Aryan Dark Ages seem, in many respects, to have been far more barbaric than the similar period in Western-European history. The art of writing, for instance, fully developed in the Harappā Civilization, seems to have become completely lost after the Aryan invasions. The early literature of the Aryans was not written down but transmitted orally. Yet, those dark and medieval ages were also ages of youth and hope, of dynamic vigor, the childhood of a new Culture. The early *Vedas* are full of this enthusiasm for life which is the privilege of youth, and they sum up this new outlook on life, this rebirth, in some famous lyric poems to the Goddess of Dawn (Uṣas):

The radiant Dawns have risen for glory, in their white splendour like
    the waves of waters.
Decking thyself, thou makest bare thy bosom, shining in majesty,
    thou Goddess Morning.[4]

And then, sometime after the middle of the second millennium
B.C., as Aryan India emerged from the Dark Ages into her proper
Middle Ages, the *Rg-Vedic* bard added:

> Arise! the breath, the life, again has reached us:
> Darkness has gone away and light is coming.[5]

. . . the splendid light of one of the greatest Cultures known to
history.

III

Medieval India: The Vedic Age and the Birth of Indian Culture

EVERY great Culture has gone through certain similar phases following in each others' footsteps in the same organic sequence—and for some inexplicable reason, the total development always lasts roughly a thousand years, from cultural birth to cultural sterility. This is part of the cyclical recurrence which a steady deepening of our knowledge and understanding of history makes increasingly evident. But just as the physical bodies of all organisms obey certain fundamental laws, every organism has its own distinct personality, entirely original and different from that of any other organism which preceded or will follow it. So it is with those great collective movements of mankind's history, collective incarnations of spiritual organisms in their own right, known as Cultures. So that it is not surprising, on forming a closer acquaintance with Indian Culture, to discover this baffling mixture of general conformity in the pattern of its development with that of all other similar developments, and yet a most profound originality which sets it sharply apart from any other cultural development known to us.

If the history of the Indians is as shadowy as has already been pointed out on more than one occasion, it is largely because, of all the people on this earth, they were the least interested in history. The picture of India's historical development is as blurred as the development of the Indian soul is clear and sharply outlined. The key to an understanding of Indian Culture lies precisely in this total indifference toward history, toward the very process of *time*. Aryan India had no memory because she focused her attention on *eternity*, not on time. Thus, the Indian world outlook developed in a direction that was diametrically opposed to China's, for instance. Break-

ing sharply with the customs prevailing in the preceding Harappā Civilization, the Aryans cremated their dead (just as the Classical Greeks cremated theirs, breaking just as sharply with the preceding Mycenaeans, who buried them). This destruction of the physical body after death implies an unconscious urge to obliterate memory, and is a symbol of a supreme indifference to time and history.

When an acute awareness of the timeless as sole ultimate reality eliminates concern for time, religion, the study of eternity, takes precedence over everything else. And the greatest symbol of this specifically Indian world outlook was the steady growth in the influence of the Brāhmins, the priestly descendants of the early sorcerers of the Aryan tribes, and their eventual supremacy when Indian Civilization finally overcame Culture. To the Indian, the supreme spiritual reality was a transfiguration of *space* and not of time, of Nature and not of History. Why this was so, we can only guess. It is probable that the great mountain ranges, Hindu Kush and Himalayas, played a tremendous part in shaping India's religious concepts. This awesome wall of craggy rocks and eternal snows rising almost straight out of the tropical jungles has been from the earliest days the Olympus of Vedic religion; its peaks became so many gods and goddesses. The violent contrast between the freezing mountain heights and the warm plains down below, added to the very sharp change of environment experienced by the Aryans when they streamed down into India, must have had a powerful impact on them. More than anything else, it must have been responsible for this sort of collective amnesia which characterizes Indian Culture and this predominance of the awareness of space over that of time. Under India's tropical sun, the Aryans' memory melted away, whereas their Aryan cousins on the Iranian highlands developed theirs to a remarkable degree.

As a form of perception, space *divides* whereas time *unites*. Space is the domain of separate entities placed side by side, the domain of *plurality*. Time, on the contrary, is the realm of the unending flow which binds all elements together into unity, as a river receives affluents and tributary streams and merges them into its powerful sweep from the past mountains to the future ocean. In space there is no directional movement, whereas in time there is one direction and one movement from past to future which sweeps everything along in its irresistible course and merges everything. Thus, for those Cultures in which the awareness of space predominates, the religious form is inevitably some form of polytheism: such was the case, and for sim-

ilar reasons, in Classical Greece and Aryan India. Wherever the awareness of time predominates, unity of one kind or another stamps the religious concepts of the given Culture: if it predominates to the extent of excluding completely a spiritual urge toward eternity, the highest concept is that of the Chinese Tao; if it implies an attempt to see the working of eternity in the single-track process of time, there is some form of monotheism (subtly qualified by dualistic tendencies, as in the Zoroastrian faith of the Iranians, or purely monotheistic as among the Jews and Muslims), and, along with monotheism, a vital tension between a transcendental God and Man.

This explains that the instinctive religion of India was, and still is, polytheistic. Deprived in his mental outlook of the time dimension, the most profound Indian philosopher could never reach a satisfactory and consistent monotheism, however much he tried, and usually ended up as a pantheist or, more usually, a monist. Thus, the true tension in Indian religion lies between polytheism and monism. Quite naturally, and from the very beginning of their cultural development, the Indians have displayed the most catholic outlook ever embodied in any culture. At first every force of nature, and then, as men turned inward, every human trait was symbolized by one or several deities. No attempt was ever made to integrate them into the stream of history and explain them as successive mental projections of an awakening psyche. In China, godlike forces of nature were soon converted into ancestors in history, space transmuted into time. In India, the process was reversed; real ancestors of the past were transformed into timeless gods, myths dwelling side by side beyond time in an eternal present, hovering permanently above the tangible world. And as time marched on and Indian Culture developed and enriched itself, they multiplied and proliferated until they filled the most capacious pantheon ever conceived by man. No stream of history was ever conceived as binding them together in the flow of time and eventually melting them into One; but eventually it was conceived, in the twilight of Indian Culture, that they could be *overcome*—essentially a *spatial* transfiguration. But it was never a union or fusion. Polytheism remained the real form of India's religious emotionalism, and monism became the real form of India's philosophical intellectualism.

The most important symbol of this affinity of the Indian soul for space-awareness rather than time-awareness is expressed in the very

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existence of their first great literary work, the *Vedas*, the Books of Knowledge. It is important to keep in mind, when contrasting space and time, that sight is the sense corresponding to an awareness of space, and sound the equivalent sense of time: "The eye creates distance, plurality, and the relations of contiguity."[1] The Vedic Aryans lived only in the world of space; and it is therefore no surprise to learn that the word *Veda*, foundation of Indian Culture, is derived from the Aryan root *vid*; that is, "seeing," vision (Latin, *video*).[2] The early Vedic poets, the *ṛsis*, called themselves the *seers* of the hymns (*sūkta*), looked upon as immutable and having existed for all eternity.[3]

The *Vedas* were the brilliant product of intuitive insight, not of the logical intellect. Known only orally at first, transmitted by word of mouth from master to disciple, the *Vedas* were apparently started during the actual invasion of India by the Aryans, at a time when the impressions made on them by their new homeland were still fresh, when their creative energy had not been blunted by an ancestral familiarity with their surroundings and by an enervating tropical climate. This Vedic period stretches roughly from 1500 B.C. to 900 B.C., a remarkable development of Indian Culture in its springtime, which resembles the timeless stirrings of an eternal sleeper dreaming out loud and then waking up slowly and gradually, spewing out great mythological tales, mulling them over, altering and reshaping them, sending them out again, recreating and deepening them generation after generation, remaining essentially fluid, poetic, illogical and undogmatic, adding endlessly without ever eliminating the superfluous, both naïve and profound. The original seers who "saw" them were and will ever remain anonymous, as anonymous as the architects of Europe's great Gothic cathedrals. This is not yet the age of unbridled individualism.

Now, as to the actors in those dreams, the occupants of the Vedic Olympus. The oldest Vedic deities were the shimmering God of Heaven, Dyaus (Greek Zeus), and Pṛthivī, the Earth Goddess. But they did not last very long and were soon overcome by their innumerable children: Varuṇa, the Encompassing Sky, the wind God Vāyu, the Fire God Agni, the Sun God Sāvitrī or Sūrya, and especially Ṛta, the guardian of physical and moral order. As we delve further into this Vedic pantheon, we come across one of the main characteristics of Indian religiosity: whereas the hierarchic organization of the Greek Olympus was relatively simple and eminently sta-

ble, that of the Indian pantheon was infinitely complex and in a
state of unending flux. If there was any history in Indian Culture,
it was taking place not on earth but high up in the ethereal heavens
where gods and goddesses were in perpetual turmoil. And so we soon
see Indra, the bearded, colossal, warlike and irascible wielder of the
thunderbolt in the *Ṛg-Veda,* take his place alongside Varuṇa as
chief deity. And then Varuṇa himself begins to pale and fade behind
Indra, taking his friend and associate Mitra, the Sun God, along
with him. Stars, mountains, rivers, human qualities and faults, all
had their presiding deity. All those gods of the Vedic pantheon em-
bodied primary and totally irrational forces struggling against each
other, symbols of the mental and emotional struggles taking place
within the developing personality of Vedic man. In many of those
deities, one can see forerunners of the future divine rulers and follow
their carriers as if they were true historical figures—Agni the Fire
God, soon entitled to special devotions because all the increasingly
numerous and complex sacrifices included offerings to him; rudi-
mentary protrayals of Viṣṇu and Śiva (Rudra), both of them explic-
itly mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda,* while Brahmā has his precursors:
Vidhātṛi (the Ordainer) and Prajāpati (the Lord of Creation). One
last feature of the Vedic pantheon: the absence of a true evil deity.

In India, as in all other societies that are still in the early stages
of their Culture, deep religiosity has the typical cruelty of childhood.
Blood sacrifices were frequent in Vedic India. Men endowed with
great vitality lived, loved, enjoyed and suffered in wild confusion;
their religious feelings exhausted themselves in passionate orgies.
Vedic men were still close to their primitive origins, profound in
their instincts rather than in their intellect, united religiously in their
expression of sensual passion.

The early mythology of India's *Vedas,* like all mythologies, should
be understood as a dream process, and its elements, its dream images,
should be analyzed symbolically, not literally. They may not be liter-
ally true, but they are true psychologically. As such, the Vedic my-
thology is, in fact, the symbolic expression of what could be termed
the collective unconscious of Aryan man, an effort to formulate
through "associative thinking" his hopes, fears and thoughts about
the universe and human destiny. Associative thinking is inevitable,
because of the inability of a Culture in its infancy to think in more
abstract terms. And it is right then and there that the historical de-

velopment of a new Culture starts, a gradual process of awakening, striving to sublimate what some analysts call the "libido" and philosophers the *élan vital* or life-force, to gradually refine and deepen the tremendous vitality of relatively primitive men and channel it into a steady cultural development.[4] It implies a progressive conversion of the crude and concrete pictorial representations of mythology into the severely abstract concepts of philosophy—the evolution leading from the *Vedas* through the *Upaniṣads* to the Vedānta and other related philosophic systems.

Like all men belonging to young societies, Vedic man was haunted by the desire to understand the origin and goal of life, and by the thirst for some form of immortality. His mythology yields this constant theme: the ape-god Hanumān, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic, symbolizes the sun, itself a symbol of immortality, as he struggles against sea monsters in the most fantastic and improbable way—improbable phantasmagorias with which our own personal dreams make us familiar. The interpretation of this type of dream myth is clear: it is a longing for rebirth, which can be obtained through a return to the mother's womb, a desire to be as immortal as the sun. Undoubtedly, this myth was inspired by the endless recurrence of dusks and dawns, each one symbolizing the death and rebirth of the sun, plunging into and emerging out of the infinite ocean or Mother Earth. The *Vedas* call the waters *mātritamāh,* the "most maternal," and imply that the birth of life must have taken place on or near the water. In the *Ṛg-Veda,* water is the one primordial element. Most other Cultures yield the same symbolism. Does not the Bible itself claim, at the beginning of Genesis: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"?[5] As a modern psychologist claims, "the maternal significance of water belongs to the clearest symbolism in the realm of mythology" and the Classical Greeks themselves stated that "the sea is the symbol of birth."[6]

In fact, the most striking thing to the analyst of Vedic mythology is that so many of its myths duplicate similar myths, with similar meanings, in most other mythologies. All cosmogonic myths are outward projections of unconscious mental processes. And whenever the contents of the primitive unconscious are activated, they appear projected. Vedic man was still a complete extrovert, not so much concerned with his own inner being or soul as with the external world of nature, to which he instinctively reacted and on which he then projected the activated contents of his unconscious.

To revert to specific symbolisms, death is almost always interpreted as entrance into the mother's womb, implying immediately a new fertilization and rebirth. Burial in Mother Earth, as in China, represents the more material, concrete longing for the physical rebirth of one's own flesh and blood (as expressed in one's offspring). Cremation, as in India, implies already a longing for physical annihilation as necessary for spiritual rebirth. In China, we have an early development of ancestor worship; there are no traces of ancestor worship in the *Vedas*.

Another important notion symbolized in many mythologies is concerned with the identification of the whole universe with an individual organism, the universe itself being a hierarchy of organisms or rather a superorganism. The horse, a symbol of time and fate, is described thus in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:*

The morning glow verily is the head of the sacrificial horse, the sun his eye, the wind his breath, the all-spreading fire his mouth, the year is the belly of the sacrificial horse. The sky is his back, the atmosphere the cavern of his body, the earth the vault of his belly. The poles are his sides, in between the poles his ribs, the seasons his limbs, the months and fortnights his joints. Days and nights are his feet, stars his bones, clouds his flesh. The food he digests is the deserts, the rivers are his veins, the mountains his liver and lungs, the herbs and trees his hair; the rising sun is his fore part, the setting sun his after part. The ocean is his kinsman, the sea his cradle.[7]

The horse symbolizes the world of creation, the product of time, that which should be sacrificed if one is to attain eternal bliss. We anticipate slightly here, for this symbol belongs to the following Upaniṣadic age. But it is important to note that this symbolism is the same as the Vedic one, that the sea is still the cradle, the mother and the origin of life, of creation and of the universe.

The *Ṛg-Veda* recognizes a Lord of Creation, Prajāpati, who destroyed the primeval Unity through his cosmogonic exertions. He performed *tapas,* originally a term implying that he "heated himself with his own heat," that is, that "he hatched," hatcher and hatched being one and the same: "As Hiraṇyagarbha, Prajāpati is the egg produced from himself, the world-egg, from which he hatches himself."[8] Thus Prajāpati gives birth to the world of multiplicity, and it is significant that *tapas,* originally implying heat, a curse in tropical India, soon became the expression for voluntary austerities, for self-

castigation. The profound psychological meaning of this myth is that *creation was an act of self-denial on the part of the creator*. Self-denial and introversion are part and parcel of the same psychological disposition; the introverted Indian conceived that absorption in one's own self, symbolically connected with re-entrance into the uterus, meant asceticism. Mysticism, that essentially feminine form of religious disposition, could not be better symbolized. And a striking hymn of the *Rg-Veda* states clearly:

> What was hidden in the shell,
> Was born through the power of fiery torments.
> From this first arose love,
> As the germ of knowledge,
> The wise found the roots of existence in non-existence,
> By investigating the heart's impulses.[9]

We find two important things symbolized here: first of all, creation is viewed as resulting from introversion in general, as an emanation of the libido or life-force; but also there is a first hint of a negative attitude toward life and the world of creation as early as the first *Veda*, joyous and buoyant as those times were. We find here in germ the view prevailing later that life and creation are either an illusion or an awful cosmic error which can only be undone by the same process which gave birth to it: mystical introspection.

In Vedic times, as in all Heroic Ages, individualism was almost nonexistent. The collective, almost tribal feeling of *participation mystique* still predominated completely. This is why men at this stage of historical development create myths, projections of their own dream pictures into the outer world, interpretations of the objective universe in subjective terms. The young and the primitive cannot separate subjective and objective phenomena as sharply as their less primitive descendants. It is only later, in the last stages of cultural development, that true individualism arises with increasing psychological differentiation and therefore with a "depsychologizing of objective science."[10] This is the transition from the *Rg-Veda* to the later *Vedas*, from tribal to feudal social orders: the individual becomes more self-conscious, detaches himself from the influence of collective opinion just as, socially, he escapes from tribal obligations and traditional duties. From this new vantage point of true individualism, late Vedic and early Upaniṣadic man began to understand the subjective limitations of knowledge, as well as see and accept the various forms of expression of the same underlying truth.

Since there was no historical consciousness, there was no elimination of past, "outdated" myths and notions; everything was preserved and lived side by side in a permanent "present" until the most profound or sublime philosophy and idealism coexisted quite peacefully with the most naïve or crassest superstitions.

An important characteristic of this Vedic mythology is not so much the predominance of the male element (typical of all Cultures in their springtime) as the early groping efforts toward some form of monism. The instinctive desire to overcome all gods was already evident, but no name was yet given to the Supreme Being who originated all the others, save the "One."

This yearning toward monism sprang from an instinctive feeling of the Vedic Indians that the act of creation was the result of an original division of the world—every form of striving, of action, of energetic current implying opposite poles. Prajāpati, the Lord of Creation, originally divided himself into primeval cow and bull (in another one of those dream-myths), then into mind (*manas*) and speech (*vac*). But whereas in China pairs of opposites were optimistically transformed, through the development of Chinese Culture, into *co-operative* pairs, in Indian Culture they preserved and then purposely emphasized and re-emphasized their antagonistic character of *opposition:* the world of creation and life in general were not viewed optimistically as a blessing, as in China, but as a hindrance to spiritual realization which should be overcome. Symbolically, speech (*vac*) was viewed as a creative expression of the *élan vital:* "In truth Prajāpati was this world, with him was *Vac* his second Self: with her did he beget life: she conceived: whereupon she went forth out of him, and made these creatures, and once again entered into Prajāpati."[11] And so mind and speech, *manas* and *vac,* are mutually opposed, symbols of the struggle between inspiration and expression, the creative urge and the inadequate means of creation, *manas* as introversion and *vac* as extroversion. In the post-Vedic period, when the One finally receives the name of Brahman, the fundamental opposition establishes itself between Name and Form, *nama* and *rūpa;* mind becomes Form, speech becomes Name. Brahman is conceived as having "extended himself into this world, through Form and through Name. These twain are the two great monsters of Brahman . . . these twain are the two mighty aspects of Brahman."[12]

The psychological analysis of polytheism then reveals that it is the

religious expression of nonunified egos, whereby certain complexes—sexual complexes, fear complexes, power complexes, and so on—become split off the main trunk of the personality and live a life of their own, sharing the same body with other more or less unrelated personality components. One can see how a predominant space-awareness would reflect on the Indian man's personality, implying as it does plurality and contiguity rather than fusion and unity. And one can also see that in the twilight of Indian Culture, the main psychological problem, that which the technique of Yoga solves, is the problem of the *reintegration* of a personality haunted by centrifugal tendencies—whose mythical exteriorizations are polytheistic deities. The correspondence between polytheism and nonunified psyches has been succinctly stated by the great modern philosopher and mystic Sri Aurobindo when he explained that most of the Vedic gods eventually came to symbolize quite consciously certain psychological functions (in the early stages of their creation, they were unconscious projections): Agni (God of Fire) symbolized *will;* Sūrya, *intelligence;* Soma (the potent drink of the Vedic Aryans), *feeling,* and so on.[13]

So it is clear that Indian Culture finally conceived of polytheism as a weakness, as a surrender to the fantasy of the imagination, as something to be overcome in the struggle toward pure monism. Post-Vedic man eventually understood that Vedic mythology was a projection of the subjective unconscious onto the objective world; and it is in a withdrawal from nature into the soul of man, in a return into himself, that he sought the truth and found the monistic One for which he yearned. He was then able, not so much to dismiss as to overcome personally the polytheism (preserving it for the slower-witted) of his Culture's springtime.

A last word should be said about the difference in temper between the Vedas and their subsequent developments. Vedic times were still joyous and life-affirming, creative and vigorous, cheerful and optimistic: the world is not yet conceived as unreal; it is the self-development of the One through his *māyā*, that is his night or magic power. There is as yet no idea of rebirth and reincarnation, although Vedic man believed vaguely in some form of life beyond death, just as day follows night, in a realm for departed souls presided over by Yama, the Lord of Death. But all the signs of the future developments are already in evidence. There is no longing for an extension of life on this earth as in China, no real desire to reach immortality through

the physical persistence of one's own flesh and blood. The expression *māyā* will soon come to imply a negative illusion; and the moral order symbolized by Ṛta is an anticipation of the inexorable *karma*.

In essence, religion as understood and practiced from time immemorial in India implies a search for the Timeless Absolute, whatever the name given to it. Psychologically, it implies on the part of the seeker or devotee a search for some form of immortality, and therefore an overcoming of death; it is, basically, a flight from the inexorable process of time, and therefore from history. All religious ceremonies and sacrifices symbolize this desire to *abolish* time and duration. Religious ritual, by prescribing the ceremonial repetition of identical gestures and attitudes, transports the devotee beyond time into the timeless; the imitation of archetypes links the present and eternity and abolishes the dread of *irreversible* time, which becomes suspended, as it were, during the sacred ceremony; the devotee has a foretaste of immortality.

By seeking assiduously the timeless, religion seeks to erase from man's consciousness the terror of the irreversible nature of time's flow. By repeating endlessly the same ceremonies, the Brāhmin priest establishes the ahistorical *rhythm* of the universe and puts the devotee in tune with it: all Brāhmanic sacrifices re-enact the Creation of the World, but in reverse, and re-establish the primordial unity of all things—that is, roll back the time that had unfolded after the Creation of the World and, as it were, shove back the cosmos into Prajāpati, the ill-advised Lord of Creation. Here, the *monistic* thirst of Indian Culture is made plain: the desire to abolish time because it is the dimension along which creation unfolds, and the desire to retrieve the primordial unity that existed before time was created.

This will to abolish time implies a simultaneous abolition of memory; implied is the idea that if one refuses to be conscious of time, it no longer exists; and that if one becomes conscious of it, it is because one has sinfully departed from the eternal archetypes. Thus, the Indian lives in a continuous present while keeping an eye on the sacred timeless; like the Classical Greeks, who were almost contemporary, they considered that Becoming and change were fundamentally unholy and unreal, that all cosmic events were cyclical and subject to an eternal return. And only repetition is a guarantee of *reality*, because it implies faithful adherence to an eternal and sacred archetype. The fundamental unreality of history becomes a basic

premise; and since suffering is caused by man's obstinate craving for the unreal, history and suffering are synonymous; suffering can come to an end only when history does.

Having abolished history, the Indian proceeded to establish a fantastic cosmology in which time, although fundamentally unreal, revolves in gigantic cycles: the smallest unit is a *yuga*, four of which make a *mahāyuga* (12,000 years), and a thousand *mahāyugas* make a supercycle of almost five million years (one day of Brahman's life), and so on ad infinitum. The cyclical aspect of these developments, and the gigantic size of the cycles, robs time of all its terrors. When it has been stated that the life of Brahman comprises two and a half million *mahāyugas*, time is lost to human consciousness; and when it is further stated that the very same process of creation–destruction– recreation starts all over again and again, time has been effectively annihilated: we are not dealing here with historical but with cosmic, astronomical time.

Toward the close of the feudal period, India saw the birth of a new social organization which superseded the rudimentary structure inherited from the Dark Ages. The distinction between Ārya (kinsman, noble) and Anārya (ignoble) disappeared gradually, to be replaced by a purely social rather than politico-military stratification between vigorous barbarians and decadent civilized. Soon, the term Ārya came to mean merely feudal nobility. The merger of the Aryan barbarian leaders and the small upper strata of the Harappā society was by now complete and produced a new ruling class of mixed descent. These rulers were sharply distinguished from the rest of the population by their physical aspect: they were white-skinned (*svitnya*) whereas the rest of the population (Dasyu; later, Sūdra) were dark-skinned. Even among the whites, all of whom were "twice-born" and entitled to the sacred thread of initiation, there were sharp social distinctions between the princely and royal families (Rājanya) and warriors (Kṣatriya), the priests (Brāhmins) and the common free men (Vis, later Vaisya). Toward the end of the truly feudal era, the fourfold division of society was an accepted fact.

Two important characteristics have to be noted: first of all, that this social order in the early stages of the development of Indian Culture included *racial* distinctions of considerable sharpness, in contrast with China, the Classical world of Greece and Rome, and many

other societies where racial consciousness was nonexistent. No other society had to contend with racial problems of such magnitude until the modern West Europeans encountered dark-skinned populations overseas and introduced them into many of the new continents which they were in the process of colonizing. Racial problems are bound to arise whenever two widely different populations, situated at both ends of the ethnic spectrum, have to live together in one community.

The Chinese, the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans had no such problem to contend with, racial differences between invaders and invaded, barbarians and civilized, being relatively slight. In Europe, even, there was no great racial difference between the barbarians and the populations of the Western Roman Empire. But Indian Culture had to live with tremendous racial differences from the very beginning of its existence. Whereas the birth of racial consciousness in Western Culture came rather late, when the Europeans began to land on distant shores, it became an immediate problem at home, on the very soil of Aryan India. The tremendous geographical barrier created by the Himalayas and Hindu Kush mountain ranges was then to India what the vast oceans were later to the Europeans. Widely different races came into immediate and violent contact, either by descending thousands of feet from frosty uplands into tropical plains, or by navigating thousands of miles across uncharted oceans to entirely new lands. Sooner or later, the idea of rigid separation between widely different races was born out of fear of miscegenation. This is made plain in India, where social stratification was mostly based on color (*varna*). The four original social classes or orders were called the four Varnas, and the most severe penalties struck those who were guilty of *varna-samkara,* confusion of classes, that is, miscegenation.

But the second fact that must be pointed out is that there were no *castes* in the Vedic Age, only social *classes*. Castes came much later, when Indian Civilization became ossified. As we shall see, the caste system was the only democratic solution in a Civilization that refused to blend widely different races into one homogeneous whole through intermarriage. But this caste system was closed and rigid, unlike a social system which is by essence fluid because it follows the laws of historical development. The rigid caste system, on the contrary, does not develop: it is essentially a "Civilization" phenomenon, a death-like ossification of a very old society—also, the final escape from history for which Indian society yearned.

The close of the Vedic era probably coincided with the end of the feudal phase of Indian history. As a rule, feudalism is a period of transition from *tribal* organization to *aristocratic* government. The feudal lords who ruled their small fiefs *individually* become merged into a new aristocratic class ruling *collectively* the whole state. Complete decentralization gives way to increasing centralization. Feudal lords always seek to be jealously independent of one another. But when the progress of trade and communications gives rise to growing cities and fast-increasing urban middle classes, this rising socio-economic complex begins to overlap their small boundaries. Their outdated fiefs become *de facto* included in far larger economic units and are no longer politically viable. This is when feudal barons are compelled to give up their independence, merge their territories and combine with each other to rule jointly the much larger political entities thus formed: the "modern" state. Every evidence points to this transformation at the close of the Vedic era. The Kṣatriyas came to represent not so much military might as *political* power. They were still the dominant class, the ruling element in the various states of the Indian world, ranking above the priestly Brāhmins. The parallel European nobility-clergy and Indian Kṣatriya-Brāhmin must be fairly close and their respective historical evolutions fairly similar.

By then, the Aryans had conquered most of Hindustan, from Kābul to the upper reaches of the Ganges. The great feudal wars and then the collapse of the feudal order profoundly altered the political landscape. Small fiefs were replaced by far larger states ruled by hereditary monarchs. Kings became far more powerful and their administrations increasingly centralized. In the later Vedic texts, cities begin to appear for the first time—modest medieval burghs at first, then larger "modern" cities, and toward the end of the great cultural development, great metropolises.[14] Along with this evolution, the political expansion of the Aryans—by now, probably thoroughly mixed with the pre-Aryan upper classes—increased its tempo. The authors of the *Ṛg-Veda* lived somewhere between modern Afghanistan and modern Punjab; the descriptions of landscape are replete with references to towering mountains and snow, and there is plenty of evidence of abundant rainfall, whereas there is no reference to rice or tropical animals such as tigers. But now, in the days when the *Atharvaveda* is being composed, rice and tigers put in an appearance, suggesting a considerable enlargement of the area occupied by the Aryans. Indian Culture expanded east and south, and at the

end of the later Vedic period the Aryans had gone considerably beyond the territory occupied by the deceased Harappā Empire. They had conquered and settled the plains fertilized by the Jumna and the upper Ganges, had worked their way across the forested mountains of the Vindhyan ranges and had established new powerful kingdoms north of the Godaveri.

The geographical pattern of all young Cultures entering their post-feudal phase consists of a central area where Culture is in full development, irradiating its influence toward the outlying countries in the making. The center of Indian culture was the "firm middle country" (between the Sarasvatī River and the Gangetic Doāb) occupied by the Kuru and Panchāla nations. Next to them were the states of the Kosalas and the Kāsis, the Videhas who energetically drained the swamps east of the Gaṇḍak River, and the state of the Vidarbhas in the valley of the Wardha. The twin centers of Culture in those days seem to have been the capital cities of the Kurus and the Panchālas, respectively Āsandīvant and Kāmpila. Their kings' exploits were duly recorded in the Vedic texts—great Kuru monarchs like Parīkshit and Janamejaya, and the great philosopher-king of the Panchālas, Pravāhana-Jaivali.

But soon enough, just as the center of European Culture moved from the Italy of the Renaissance to the France of Versailles, the center of gravity of Indian Culture moved toward the country of the Videhas. By the time of the *Upaniṣads* (after the close of the Vedic Age), King Janaka, ruler of the Videhas, acting very much as the Louis XIV of India, gathered poets, philosophers and artists at his court. And like its French counterpart, this absolute monarchy was overthrown by a drastic revolution shortly before the rise of Buddhism, to be replaced by the Vajjian Confederacy.

The growth of the absolute power of the kings was a natural consequence of the social evolution. Feudalism was done away with, and the rising urban middle classes supported the efforts of their rulers to curb the powers of the aristocracy which had succeeded the feudal barons. But, as in Europe, the priests refused to knuckle under to the power of absolute monarchs even though, as in Europe, autocratic political power made inroads at the expense of their privileges. Whereas Brāhmins were "liable to removal at will," Vaisyas could be "oppressed at will" and Sūdras could be "expelled and slain at will."[15] With the growth of the rulers' autocratic power went greater pretensions made manifest in their new titles. The *royal* status with

which the Rājahs of the "middle country" were still content, was soon overshadowed by the new *imperial* status of the great rulers of the new states in the east, who styled themselves *Samrāṭ*. And an Indian scholar rightly claims that "the association of the *Samrāṭ*, whose status was now regarded as higher than that of the *Rājah*, with the east is important. It probably points to the growth of imperialism in the east—a tendency that became more marked in the early days of Buddhism."[16]

Vedic texts make it plain that this was a period of profound social and political transformation, a period of great growth in the scope of centralized bureaucracies under the authority of cabinet ministers (*sachiva*) and provincial governors (*satapati*). But also, it was a period of social unrest, of struggle between rulers and subjects, between kings and Brāhmins. Although the aristocratic character of Indian society was becoming more pronounced (as happens usually on the very eve of democratic revolutions), social classes were essentially fluid, and intermarriage between upper and lower classes was becoming more frequent. Kṣatriyas and Brāhmins still struggled for supremacy, like nobility and clergy in the Europe of the Reformation, but it became plain that the Brāhmins were slowly gaining the upper hand. The main struggles within the maturing Culture of India were now centered around religion, and the eventual victory of those who were the professional interpreters of religious values was inevitable.

About this time, also, large-scale landlordism began to be a significant social phenomenon. Wealthy men (*ibhyas*) became owners of entire villages. Trade and industry developed on a considerable scale. Classes of semi-hereditary merchants (*vāṇija*) came into being. Coins were minted and elaborate financial structures multiplied. Specialization on a growing scale became a marked feature of India's developing industries. India was entering her "Modern Age."

IV

India's Modern Age: The Upaniṣads

INDIA's Modern Age did not come about suddenly but grad-ually. Just as Europe experienced an awkward transition between the Middle Ages and the Reformation, India experienced, between the *Ṛg-Veda* and the *Upaniṣads*, the decadent era of the later *Vedas* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, the sort of "late" Middle Ages when ossification begins to threaten the whole religious and social fabric of a still-young society—calling forth, as in Europe, the twin reactions of a Renaissance and a Reformation. India experienced both.

The optimistic buoyancy of the *Ṛg-Veda* had eventually given way to the darker, pessimistic and fearful mood of the *Atharva-Veda,* whose world picture was replete with nefarious ghosts, grinning de-mons and spirits of death, and whose rules of conduct were centered on bloody and cruel sacrifices. Men no longer loved or admired the gods but feared them cringingly. Religious spirit was gradually re-placed by the magical. The Ṛg-Vedic devotional *mantra* (prayer) became a magic spell or incantation that sought to ward off a threat or compel a reluctant spirit, in true magical style, rather than im-plore it, in true religious style. The prevailing deities were now Kāla (Time), Kāma (Love), and Skambha, who replaced Prajāpati and was soon going to metamorphose itself into *puruṣa* and Brahman. Hell and its horrors came in for an increasing share of attention. In many ways, this *Atharva-Veda* represents the rising demonology which became so prominent in Europe's pre-Reformation days.

Then, the *Yajur-Veda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* emphasized the decline of the true spirit of religious fervor along with the growth of an in-tricate ritual, a complex liturgy, a cold, formal and artificial organi-zation of clerical pomp and sacrifices. It would seem that at all such periods there is a deliberate attempt on the part of an increasingly powerful clergy to emphasize the dark and fearful side of religion in

order to increase its power over the superstitious minds of its followers. The gods and spirits are no longer accessible to the common man as they were in the earlier days: the priestly "experts" interpose themselves and become the highly paid spiritual attorneys of an increasingly bewildered population. Brāhmin priests became as powerful and as corrupt as the late medieval clergy in Western Europe, an Indian clergy bent on securing to the utmost their secular power and prerogatives through complex ceremonies and mechanical sacerdotalism. Dry and pedantic scholasticism took over the great Vedic Revelation and exploited it to the full for the benefit of the Brāhmins.

Meanwhile, new deities began to crowd the Vedic pantheon: Viṣṇu and Śiva became increasingly powerful and their figures more sharply outlined; but the most important metamorphosis among the gods was that of Brahman (from the root *Bṛh*, to swell or to grow), which in the *Ṛg-Veda* designated the prayer or hymn addressed to the One, then came to designate the spell cast by the priest, and finally came to substitute for the One itself. Brahman soon came to be regarded as the creative principle of the world. No doubt, all those metamorphoses were the work of the clergy itself, intent on an increasing identification of all that was sacred with their very persons and profession. And this, of course, fitted in with the great social and political changes of the times. The *Brāhmaṇas,* compiled in the days of aristocratic influence and regal rule, were full of instructions for the performances of royal sacrifices—the *rājasūya* ceremony or royal coronation, the famous *asvamedha* or horse sacrifice that was a pretext for multitudes of interstate wars. Those were days of increasing royal power and growing clerical pretensions—which were bound to clash, sooner or later. The famous statement of the Brāhmins that "Verily there are two kinds of gods; for the gods themselves assuredly are gods and then the priests who have studied and teach Vedic lore are the human gods" could impress the broad public but certainly failed to impress the political rulers and the more thoughtful men. The age of the *Brāhmaṇas* was undoubtedly an age of decline, of immorality in the sense that liturgical performances became more important than spiritual progress, that ritual and magic substituted for true spiritual salvation. A reaction was in order, and with it India entered her Modern Age.

Great historical movements are always complex and have to be

seen as organic wholes in which every vital element plays an essential part. The age of the *Upaniṣads* (800 B.C. to 500 B.C.) is one such complex movement, all at once a reaction against the medieval ossification of the *Brāhmaṇas* and a bold leap forward in man's understanding of the world and of himself. It is the end of what could be called the "medieval" phase of Brahmanism, and the beginning of a true Indian "Reformation."

Rising out of the anonymous collectivism of all Medieval Ages, when religion is essentially a *social* undertaking, a true individualism arose in India as it did in the Europe of the Renaissance. From being the framework that held together the social structure, the arts and sciences, laws and economic activity, religion became predominantly an individual affair: the fate of the individual, not of society, became all that mattered. To formulate this new outlook, the most daring mystics and thinkers of the time began to compose those masterpieces of world literature known as *Upaniṣads,* of which Schopenhauer wrote that "in the whole world, there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upaniṣads."* Indeed, they were the conclusion of the whole process of religious growth which is so evident in the early *Vedas,* the spiritual essence of the former buoyant polytheism of the Aryan tribesmen—but still expressed in paradoxical, rather unsystematic and unphilosophic terms, and essentially meditative and lyrical.

The *Upaniṣads* should be viewed in their true historical context. In those days, creative individualism comes into its own and uses every instrument at its disposal to carry out its true "psychic" emancipation from the fetters of a conformist society. The creative individual carries one step further the emancipation started when tribal society breaks up into a feudal one, and eventually goes to the very extreme limit of his emancipation—until he threatens, in the twilight of Culture, to destroy society itself. Now society seems no longer to exist for its own sake but for the sake of a limited group of strong, creative men of genius—warlike and statesmanlike noblemen, profound philosophers, trail-blazing artists. Society is the necessary support and scaffolding for the development of individual genius, and the considerable inequality of social position and individual endowment, joined with considerable social fluidity, creates this essential and stimulating "pathos of distance" which Nietzsche has so well analyzed.[1]

It was in such a setting that Indian Culture reached the climax

of its creativity. And so it was also that the *Upaniṣads*, forming the concluding part of the *Vedas*, came to be known as *Veda-anta*, the end of the *Vedas*, shortened to *Vedānta*. Many centuries later, philosophers came to use the confused and paradoxical doctrines expounded intuitively in the *Upaniṣads* to uphold one or another of their philosophic systems. All subsequent forms of Indian thought, including heretical doctrines such as Buddhism and Jainism, grew out of the same common Upaniṣadic root.

The core of the Upaniṣadic teaching, the doctrine of Brahman and Ātman, was at first developed and expounded by Kṣatriyas or patronized by them as Europe's princely and aristocratic powers patronized humanists and anticlerical philosophers. And the anticlerical attitude of the times in India was just as marked as it was to be two thousand years later in the very different European setting. It is only very much later, after the final breath of cultural creativity had been expelled and Civilization was finally established, that the Brāhmins appropriated the *Upaniṣads* for themselves. Meantime, although many wise Brāhmins had turned against their own selfish and narrow-minded peers, the priestly class as a whole suffered severely from this "Protestant Reformation" in an Indian setting. Their intellectual prestige was, first of all, shattered. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* we have the striking account of the Kṣatriya ruler Ajātasatru of Kāsī (Benares) who refutes the errors of a Brāhmin and teaches him the real esoteric truth, thus showing the dependence of backward Brāhmins on the enlightened Kṣatriyas.[2] We also read about the famous Kṣatriya Sanatkumarā who taught philosophy to the Brāhmin Nārāda.[3]

The "protestant" character of the *Upaniṣads* became gradually more apparent. The emphasis now was on *individual* salvation ("There is nothing higher than the person," state the *Upaniṣads*),[4] with a contemptuous disregard of all the pomp and circumstances of rites and sacrifices which make religious worship a *collective* affair and a social cement. The Upaniṣadic reform attempted, in its most extreme form, to do away with the Brāhmins as intermediaries and re-establish direct connections between man and the Absolute, such as prevailed, or at least were thought to prevail, in earlier times. And there was no better, more devastating weapon than ridicule: the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* lampooned the clergy without mercy, comparing the orthodox Brāhmins to a procession of dogs holding each other's tail and clamoring: "Om! let us eat. Om! let us drink. Om!

may the gods Varuṇa, Prajāpati and Sāvitrī bring us food."⁵ The *Aitereya Brāhmaṇa* describes the typical Brāhmin as a "receiver of gifts, a drinker of *soma*, an eater of food, to be expelled at will." And the repulsive, yet jolly, glutton who is ceaselessly mocked in Sanskrit drama, the foolish Vidūṣaka, is invariably a Brāhmin.⁶

Placed thus back into their historical context, the *Upaniṣads* truly appear as a Protestant movement, although a gentler one than its European counterpart. It was not in the nature of the Indian temperament to be dogmatic or intolerant, or to break sharply with prevailing customs and old traditions. Brāhmins were mocked but not persecuted or slain, or even dismissed as a group. The Upaniṣadic movement sought persuasion rather than persecution, a new and better type of Brāhmin rather than no Brāhmin at all. But there again, the typical emphasis of all Protestant Reformations became manifest in this particular Indian setting: the emphasis on ethics and the promotion of an almost independent morality. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* uses the term Brāhmin in a purely ethical sense: the Brāhmin is born to fulfill his *dharma,* born for social duty and not for pleasure⁷ (we have already here the germs of the new social sense that awakens at the end of the Culture phase of a society). According to the later *Mārkandeya Purāṇa,* the Brāhmin can do nothing "for the sake of enjoyment."⁸ In fact, there are many traces of outright puritanism in the Upaniṣads, of revolt against the vigorous, joyful and sensuous enjoyment of Vedic times.

In one respect more, the *Upaniṣads* and the related literature of the times prepared the ground for future development: by democratizing, in spite of esoteric restrictions, religious education and knowledge. This was done largely through the nonesoteric and nonsecret epics and *Purāṇas.* The Upaniṣadic teachers became the educators of the Indian people and emphasized the possibility for any man, regardless of birth and social position, to join religious orders; they further emphasized that Brāhmins had no monopoly of religious knowledge or spiritual power. And they finally granted to women the same rights as men.

However great the similarities between the evolutions of all great Cultures, differences are also quite marked. The great social and racial inequality prevailing in India at the time did not allow such a great diffusion of knowledge as, let us say, in Renaissance Europe. Vedic knowledge was not shared with non-Aryans. And although

there was a democratic spirit at work by the time of the *Upaniṣads*, knowledge was still restricted to privileged groups. But it would seem, from a perusal of Upaniṣadic texts, that it was more a matter of replacing birth by individual merit than of actually spreading knowledge throughout the entire population. And it is highly likely that Sūdras had no knowledge whatsoever of the sacred texts. Yet, it was also about the time of the *Upaniṣads* that the temporarily submerged pre-Aryan elements began to seep into the expanding Indian Culture, as submerged elements of the deceased Greco-Roman world invaded Europe at the end of the Middle Ages; in both cases, it implied a Renaissance, a harking back to forms, customs and traditions which antedated the birth of the expanding Indian and European Cultures. The ghosts of the great Harappā and Roman Civilizations haunted their successors and many of their preserved cultural elements filtered into the new maturing Cultures.

The *Upaniṣads* were essentially esoteric, secret doctrines imparted by specific teachers (*guru*) to individual disciples (*śiṣya*). Because their philosophy was clearly beyond the comprehension of uneducated masses, secrecy was essential if the spreading of doubt and destructive skepticism among the masses was to be avoided. The sharp separation between *parā vidyā*, esoteric (absolute) truth and *aparā vidyā*, exoteric (relative) truth was rigorously maintained and ceaselessly emphasized. No controversy, no debate between these two outlooks could take place. The Upaniṣadic development represents a continuous deepening of understanding rather than the elaboration of a logical system; and knowledge was made contingent on the personal qualities of the disciples, on character, morality, emotional stability and intelligence.

A comparison with the parallel development of Greek Culture makes this plain. The almost contemporary Culture of Greece had started out in similar fashion in the Homeric Age, a feudal period during which Hellenic religious faith created a polytheistic pantheon similar in many respects to the Indian. But the parallelism between the two Cultures was soon shattered by the appearance of an *intolerant* critical philosophy in Asia Minor which destroyed the old dreamlike, anthropomorphic myths of the Culture's springtime. This philosophy, unlike the Indian *Upaniṣads*, was not esoteric but displayed to all regardless of character and morality. This esoteric Greek thought, instead of sliding into and slowly altering or completing and explaining the primitive myths, as was the case in India,

was determined to smash the Olympian pantheon, satirize the gods and create a devastating chasm between past and present that could no longer be bridged. The great Greek creators like Aeschylus and Sophocles understood the psychological reality of these dreams and childhood myths; but soon Protagoras, the Sophists and their successors sent those myths to their doom. This emancipation of Greek philosophy from the forms and fetters of earlier polytheism, this true twilight of the Olympic gods, created a fatal dualism which put religious faith on one side, logic and reason on the other, in antagonistic positions, that was to plague Classical Culture and eventually contribute decisively to the destruction of the Classical world. India, more tolerant and understanding, with a far more profound knowledge of psychological realities, was spared this fatal chasm, and her religious evolution presents a continuity which is in stark contrast, not only to the Classical, but to our own Western evolution.

Yet, we cannot overlook the fact that at one period in India's history (the era of Buddha and early Buddhism, the transition from Culture to Civilization) this chasm did open slightly. But, as we shall see, it was soon closed; and the eventual transformation and then extinction of Gautama's doctrine in India was symbolic of this re-established connection. In the Classical world of Greece and Rome, this connection was never re-established and Classical Civilization collapsed because of it. Whereas the Upaniṣadic Indian turned away from the outer world of nature to his inner being, from external objective contemplation to the godlike universe of introspection, the Greek continued to look out at the universe. But understanding it in increasingly *intellectual* and logical terms, he turned against the former symbolism of his Culture's childhood dreams. The earth-warming star was no longer the Sun God Helios but a mere ball of fire compelled to obey the strict laws of the new physical sciences. The Indian merely turned away from the external universe altogether and left the Vedic pantheon alone instead of shattering it with sarcasm and contempt.

No doubt, the *Upaniṣads* were the teachings of many Indian Luthers and Calvins; but instead of revolting openly against the prevailing polytheistic catholicism, they accepted it as necessary for the masses and simply bypassed it. Polytheism was left behind by those who were willing to do so, as being merely the manifestation of unintegrated personalities, whereas through severe introspection the *Upaniṣads* showed the chosen disciples the road to complete monism.

They did not reject or ignore the outside world and did not stamp out polytheism: they merely outgrew it, retaining Vedic mythology as a convenient symbolism through which the higher spiritual reality could be apprehended by those of lesser intellectual, and more emotional, temperament.

In the *Upaniṣads*, we have a developing outlook rather than a coherent system, an example of historical growth (without historical consciousness) in which the stages of development evolve out of one another rather than a watertight structure. They are replete with conflicting ideas and contradictory statements, representing the gradual emergence of consciousness from the earlier collective unconscious of the Vedic Aryans. Synthesis is implicit rather than explicit, intuitive but not intellectual. It is a vast melting pot in which all the basic ideas churn around in a state of complete fusion. Polytheism is outgrown but preserved alongside monism and vague allusions to monotheistic possibilities.

The essence of the Upaniṣadic teaching, to the extent that it can be coherently summarized, lies in the thesis that the Absolute is not separate from man and nature but immanent in both. The transcendent outlook of the *Vedas* (an outward projection of Vedic man's unconscious) becomes an insight into the immanent nature of the Absolute: "The infinite is not *beyond* the finite but *in* the finite."[9] Man's goal is not so much union with the Divine (as in monotheism) as a discovery of the basic identity between the Self (Ātman) and the Absolute or Divine (Brahman), which is the basic principle of monism. Already, we can detect in Indian Culture an emphasis on the recovery of a latent Being, rather than the striving to Become—Becoming being unreal since the process of time has no reality whatsoever.

In the early *Upaniṣads*, Brahman, the "ground" of the universe, is a very material principle identified with food (*anna*) or breath (*prāṇa*) or a combination of heat, water and food. Ātman, on the other hand, is referred to as the body, or rather as the trunk of a man's body. The identification Brahman-Ātman implies an identification of man's inner organs (microcosm) with the universe (macrocosm) seen as a gigantic superorganism in its own right. This identification brings together the two conceptions of the Godhead: transcendent (Brahman) and immanent (Ātman), and merges them. As time went on, the *Upaniṣads* shelled off their materialistic

coating and became more spiritualized, more detached. Brahman was no longer identified with material elements and became the *Satyasya Satyam,* the "real of the real," beyond description; it could no longer be referred to except in negative terms; the limits of intellectual understanding were then reached.[10] In all this, it is clear that Indian Culture had hardly any conception of a transcendent Almighty; it was rather an immanent one which they (the *śiṣyas*) sought in what could be termed a "downward transcendence."

The wealth of psychological insight revealed in the *Upaniṣads* and their various commentaries cannot be adequately summarized. But there can be no doubt that they are based on the most profound study and understanding of human nature ever achieved, one with which we twentieth-century Westerners, in spite of our vast present-day knowledge, have not yet fully caught up.[11] No other Culture but the Indian has ever probed the depths of the human soul so thoroughly; no other has understood so much about man's unconscious, his dreams, his symbolism; no other has gone so far in establishing the natural correlations between physiology and psychology.

The world-outlook of Indian Culture assumes its final shape in the *Upaniṣads.* It is still a mere world-outlook, not yet a philosophical abstraction from it; but it can already be presented as a whole, coherent picture.

Polytheism is now fully outgrown, but not dismissed. Gods are still accepted as psychological realities, but are now assumed to be inferior to human beings in the sense that they cannot grow and develop. Being pure "will," without having to overcome the resistance of matter and form, they are inherently changeless. In order to get beyond their imperfect status as individualized deities, the "shining ones" have to die (since there can be no eternity for individualized forms) and be reincarnated as human beings, dreams have to be materialized and the word has to become flesh, an implicit admission that man is the highest stage reached by the Spirit on its way to self-realization. The immortality of deities is quite relative (*āpekṣikam*) since they are still involved in the phenomenal world (*saṁsāra*) and are therefore transitory. In the later *Upaniṣads,* the gods began to lose even their reality and became purely *existential;* they became all *iṣṭa-devatās,* gods from among whom one may choose whichever is more suitable for one's specific purposes. They were now fundamentally illusory. And they were understood no longer

as specific individuals endowed with proper names but as ranks or titles indicating a given position (*sthāna-visesha*) of emanations of the Absolute: he who happens to occupy the position and plays the part, bears the name. The *Upaniṣads* soon lost any consideration for man's mental pictures and refused to let him project any longer the elements of his unconscious into the objective phenomenal world. They still admitted, however, just as a physician recognizes the existence of a disease in a patient, that these mental pictures were important for the beholder: "A person becomes of the same nature as his thought." And also "Whatever idea you have in mind when you quit the body at death, that idea you will realize." But all such mental pictures and ideas should eventually be dissolved by strenuous meditation.

The *Upaniṣads* thus teach man to become more self-reliant, to meditate rather than appeal to polytheistic gods. But then the problem of the nature of man's thought presents itself; the analysis of the structure of man's mental processes becomes essential. The basic teaching of the *Upaniṣads* concerns the inadequacy of the mere intellect, of reason and logic. Without denying the intellect its rightful place in the scheme of contingent things, the Indian thirsting for real knowledge has to use direct perception. Intuition rather than ratiocination will give him the immediate insight into reality, an instantaneous apprehension of the Absolute. The senses have to be stilled, quieted down by fasting and pure living, before man can look into himself, searching for Ātman, the soul of the universe of which he is but a detached fragment. Man must seek himself beyond his physical body, his mind and his perishable ego. And beyond Ātman he must apprehend Brahman, the Godhead, the unborn and undying impersonal essence of the universe. The last stage of his spiritual evolution, and the most arduous, is the identification of the immanent Ātman with the transcendent Brahman—in terms of Hegelian dialectics, which owe an important debt to Indian thought, Brahman is the thesis, Ātman the antithesis, and the realization-identification the final synthesis.

Since man the "knower" is not merely his intellect but his whole being, it was only natural, in the era of the *Brāhmaṇas,* that the prime function of the priestly Brāhmins was to establish, thanks to their knowledge of magical correlations, the correspondences between man and nature, between the internal human being and the external world. The whole of our scientific knowledge springs from

these early magical identifications between the elements of the macrocosm—the stars, sun and moon, the earth, water, wind and fire—with the elements of the microcosm—man's organs and limbs. These dual, corresponding elements were then identified with the symbolical details of the sacrificial rituals performed by the priest and designed to perform the supreme act: the symbolic identification of Ātman with Brahman—that is, of microcosm and macrocosm. Through ritual, nature's forces were fettered and brought under human control.

But all this was now sublimated by the introverted *Upaniṣads.* Ritualistic sacrifices lost their appeal for the intelligentsia and were replaced by speculative research leading away from crude magical conjuration to actual knowledge: the path of ritualistic activity (*karma-mārga*) gave way to the path of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*). The correlation between microcosm and macrocosm became more subtle, and through countless experiments and meditations were stated by the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* as follows: earth, fire and water with human breath, sight and skin; or again the wind, sun, moon and stars were equated with man's hearing, mind, speech and touch. And while the progressive penetration of keen minds into the subtle universe of pure abstraction proceeded relentlessly, the more concrete manifestations (the personal deities) were retained by those thinkers who knew that abstract knowledge satisfied the highly cultured minds that followed the *jñāna* path of knowledge—but who also knew that the average man needs the emotional devotions realized through sacrificial rites and thanks to which he could reach through love (*bhakti*) the same results as more fully developed minds.

The profound wisdom of a religious system which affirmed everything and denied nothing paid tremendous dividends. The tolerant, generous and broad-minded acceptance of all forms, all human weaknesses, but also the full promotion of human creativity, eventually opened up metaphysical vistas which remained closed to most other Cultures. Once and for all, it became an accepted fact that not only the world of nature and ritual sacrifices, but also intellectual concepts and abstract ideas are nothing but signs and symbols pointing to the supreme mystery. The world of forms (*rūpa*) and names (*nāman*) are nothing but reflections of the Absolute, mere contingent manifestations of something that can only be "experienced" and not just thought about. The pure love of *bhakti* can

reach it and so can the negation, the *neti, neti* or "not so, not so" of *jnāna,* the intellcetual weapon whereby the intellect itself is gradually left behind by an intuitive realization of the Absolute.

The world of logie was, therefore, soon transcended by Indian thought. What the Indian thinker and seeker wanted to grasp was not empty shells—symbols or abstract concepts—but the living, dynamie reality which courses ceaselessly through the contingent world. Upaniṣadic man was still vital and dynamie, and did not turn his back on life even though he sought to reach the timeless reality hidden behind life. Full acceptance of life as it manifests itself, and a simultaneous search for the Absolute beyond it, were bound to eliminate a merely intellectual logie that insists, because of its very nature, on remaining on a horizontal plane. The Indian thinker sought to rise vertically out of this world of appearances, and instead of a *mechanical* logie that would keep him bound to the illusory world of abstract concepts, he adopted the *organic,* lifelike method of dialectics—almost three thousand years before Hegel re-establishd dialectics upon the moribund body of Greek and Cartesian logic. In the world of nature, "the most alogical developments take place every day, on every side, as a matter of course. The rules of life are not those of logic but of dialectics; the reasonings of nature are not like those of the mind, but rather like those of our illogical belly, our procreative faculty, the vegetable-animal aspect of our microeosm."[12]

Life's natural dialectics proceed along the lines of a marriage of opposites, and of a transfer of the entire problem onto a higher plane of understanding where the whole process starts all over again. Truth and reality can only be reached at the far end of a pyramid of *coincidences of opposites,* and nothing but dialectics can handle the needed identification of incompatibles. It should, however, be emphasized that, in keeping with the whole temper of Indian Culture, Indian dialectics were not dynamic but static, in the sense that the Indian mind did not conceive that the dialectical development, in the sense of Becoming, was creative; it merely uncovered the statie Being that is ever there, the identity between Brahman and Ātman. It is not a process of actually bringing object and subject to coincide but to see the coincidence that actually and timelessly *is,* and is the sole reality.

Dialectics are based on the premise that human language is structurally based on pairs-of-opposites (Sanskrit *dvandva*). In the *Mānava-Dharmasāstra* we are told that they were ordained by the

Almighty Creator of the World: "Moreover, in order to distinguish actions, he separated merit from demerit, and he caused the creature to be affected by the *pairs-of-opposites*, such as pain and pleasure."[13] And the commentator Kulluka mentions many typical pairs-of-opposites: love and hate, hunger and thirst, care and carelessness, and so on. But the Indian attitude is not to enjoy this intellectual game, and since time and history have no recognized existence, it cannot equate this dialectical process, or any other process, with reality itself (which Western thought is sometimes prone to do). Reality is not in the process but hidden behind it; and it is essentially static. No wonder then that the *Rāmāyana* epic remarks despondently that "Beneath the pairs-of-opposites must the world suffer without ceasing."[14]

So long as man thinks intellectually, dialectics are the only form of logical thinking that is valid. It is, as we can learn from a study of all other Cultures, the only fruitful thought form, the most natural to man since it is in complete harmony with the structure of human psychology and of man-made languages, since linguistic knowledge has to recognize that all root words come to birth as opposite twins. But Indian thought refused to develop a dialectical method comparable, in scope and precision of logical articulation, to Hegel's, for the simple reason that it always insisted on the subordination of the logical intellect to intuition—subordination, not partnership on terms of equality. Indian dialectics rather became a preparation for mystical enquiries, and are based on a succession of "states of being" rather than a rigorous dialectical progression by the triadic movement thesis-antithesis-synthesis. And whereas, imbued with the spirit of historical Becoming, Hegel and especially many of his followers tended to equate the very dialectic process itself with Absolute Reality, the Indians flatly stated that it was merely a first step in the direction of knowledge, one that should be overcome as promptly as possible. The triumph of spiritual liberation starts only when one has overcome the pairs-of-opposites (*nirdvandva*, free from opposites), and time and again reference is made by all authorities (by Manu, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, the *Purāṇas* and, of course, the *Upaniṣads*) to this liberation of the soul from the trammels of intellectual pairs-of-opposites.

But, so long as man thought in words, so long did he use the triadic symbol; this we find even in the purely religious concepts. Even the monistic Vedānta schools of thought qualify Brahman *sac-cid-*

ānanda, or Being-Awareness-Bliss, corresponding to Christianity's Holy Trinity—the Father as Being, the Son as Logos and the Holy Ghost as Love. Or again, the later division of the Godhead (Nirguṇa Brahman, that is, Brahman free from the three *guṇas* constituent of *prakṛti* or matter) into Brahman the Creator (Saguṇa Brahman, bound by the three *guṇas*), Viṣṇu the Preserver and Śiva the Destroyer. The triune aspect of the Almighty belongs to many different religions and finds its source in phallic symbolism, the male genitals being the origin of all trinitarian symbols.[15]

Dialectics were the natural and inevitable tool of Indian thought, and their application was bound to destroy automatically any budding dogmatism or intolerance, giving to Indian philosophy an unparalleled broad-mindedness. Every conflict or disagreement was a source of synthetic wealth, every logical contradiction could be overcome by dialectic treatment. Thanks to dialectics, man's limited intellect was reintegrated into the world of nature, its limitations fully grasped but its usefulness justly appreciated. Experimental psychology and mystical introspection could develop freely without having to render undue accounts to the corrosive criticism of intellectual logic; man's rational faculties had no other task than to register and analyze the various states of "Being" through which the seeker rose to final union between Ātman and Brahman. While the priests remained outwardly concerned with harnessing the unseen powers according to Vedic scriptures and satisfied the uneducated with their ritual sacrifices, Upaniṣadic man was free to devote himself without any dogmatic or clerical restriction to mystical introspection.

Experimental psychology entailed mostly a thorough analysis of man's unconscious processes, their metaphysical significance and the means whereby they could be brought under control. All forms of consciousness were studied in great detail in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad,* and the normal states of consciousness were boiled down to the same three fundamental terms of dialectics: man's state of waking-being, *vaiśvānara* (common to all men), in which he is conscious of the external objective world and of his separation from it; his state of dream-sleep, *taijasa,* which is the subjective state of inner knowledge undistorted by the impact of the objective world; and both these states of consciousness spring out of the third state, that of dreamless sleep, *suṣupti,* and both should aim at returning to the state of cosmic non-being out of which consciousness, whatever its form, originated.

The state of man in dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*) is strikingly described in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:* "As a man when in the embrace of a well-loved woman knows nothing, neither outside nor inside, so does this man (*puruṣa*) when in the embrace of the intelligent self know nothing within or without. That is his form in which his desire is fulfilled, in which the Self is his desire, in which he has no desire and has passed beyond sorrow."[16] One can see that this is a positive state of bliss still, and not of annihilation. The *Upaniṣad* adds that in this state the soul feels "I am this (world), I am the whole" and comments "this is the highest world."[17] The striking thing, however, is that Indian thought implies that the stages and degrees of reality are just the reverse of what Western man, for instance, would assume. Waking-being and the phenomenal world (contemptuously dismissed as *vaiṣvānara,* or "common to all men") is less real than the dream state, which is purely subjective and personal, and which in turn is less real than dreamless sleep. And another striking description of *suṣupti* states that "The state of deep sleep is a unified state, a mass of wisdom (*prajñāna*), composed of bliss: it experiences bliss; its mouth (or head) is thought; it is wise; this is the third part. This is the Lord of all, the Knower of all, this is the inner controller, the womb of all, the origin and end of creatures."[18]

The passage from one state to another is a small-scale replica of the universal cosmogony—of world creation, world preservation and world destruction by Nirguṇa Brahman's godly emanations: Saguṇa Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Both dreams and the tangible realities of waking-being evolve out of nowhere, "like clouds condensing out of the void of the firmament,"[19] out of a common essence which is beyond form and name. And beyond all this, there is a fourth state which includes all others as eternity includes time, the state known as *turīya,* the apprehension of timeless unity in which all dialectical opposites disappear into the void from which they were conjured, the mystical apprehension of the oneness of all.

Each new generation saw a deepening of mystical introspection, a majestic widening of the metaphysical horizon, a more profound psychological insight, a more elaborate formulation of spiritual truths. Every effort tended to overcome the individual personality, the monstrous ego, to instill into man this deep awareness of collective, impersonal and timeless Absolute. And because they assume

that the true Self *is* the Absolute, the psychological study of the Self is the most important inquiry of the *Upaniṣads*. Because of their profound awareness of the intellect's limitations, because of their feeling that the immanent Divine suffuses every atomic particle in the visible universe, the *Upaniṣads* and their literary offspring were prompted to involve the *whole* human being in this quest for self-realization, rather than just the mind. As much as the intellect, the will, emotions, sensitivity, the poetic and artistic feelings, the physical sinews of the body were increasingly brought into play. Their keen feeling for the intimate connection between the physical, mental and spiritual elements in man must have been a natural outgrowth of the violent physical and psychological contrasts which geographical wanderings from one extreme climate to another and the abrupt racial contacts between extremely different breeds of men had evoked. They had observed very soon, in early Vedic days, that great physical differentiation entailed equally great mental differentiation and never lost sight of the interdependence of mind and matter. Racial distinctions, strict rules against miscegenation (including endogamy and exogamy), hygienic regulations, Yoga, all the basic institutions of Indian Culture were devised to preserve a superior physique—which superior physique was deemed to be a sign of spiritual superiority not to be debased by racial mixtures or an unclean living that would automatically entail spiritual degradation. Quite naturally, also, was added a desire to use and control the physical functions in order to dominate and transcend the mind.

Having made complete abstraction of the existence of time and history, and seeking the dissolution of the human personality into the superpersonal reality of Brahman, it was only natural that the idea of reincarnation presented itself to Upaniṣadic man with increasing insistence. Man's soul started to wander through cycles of materialization until it found its way out of creation. The earliest mention of the belief in rebirth on this earth can be found in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa,* when the idea of reincarnation, implying repeated deaths, was viewed as a cursed evil, a nightmare imposed on those who failed to perform sacrifices. No idea of sin was involved; the idea of sacrifice as an atonement for sin never took hold of the Indian mind.[20] The Indian soul never really knew what a guilt complex was. It was all a simple matter of straightforward retribution for bad deeds, explained and emphasized by Brāhmin priests to keep their flocks under control. Until then, Vedic religion knew nothing

about reincarnation, although there was, perhaps, a first inkling of this notion in one hymn of the *Ṛg-Veda* when the expression *bāhu-prajaḥ* was interpreted *bāhu-janma-bhāk*, "subject to many births"; but it could just as well, and more plausibly, be translated "having abundant offspring."[21] Here, however, we can see the decisive bifurcation, the choice between earthly immortality through offspring and the spiritual immortality through survival beyond death. And we know that soon afterward the Indians began to turn their backs on the world.

The root of the belief in reincarnation was an outlook which denied permanence to the personality or soul. Christians believe in the eternity of man's personality (the Gospel's resurrection of the body is a symbol of this belief). Whereas to the Classical Greeks and Romans, human personality (from *persona,* the mask worn by actors on the stage) was merely a part acted on the life stage, the succeeding Christians made it into a definite thing, entirely original, temporal in its beginning but eternal thereafter. The Indian did not believe, indeed did not want to believe, in the permanence of the human personality as an original entity: to him it was a veil to be torn aside and destroyed so that the immutable, anonymous reality of the indestructible but impersonal Ātman might be uncovered. Since the process of time has no meaning, since history has no goal, every individual is merely re-enacting the same endless part, creating nothing new, making no original contribution to human progress. Why, then, should his individuality be preserved in eternity? Belief in the transmigration of souls finally robs history of all its tragic but thrilling significance. This explains why there is not only no work of history in Sanskrit India, but also no genuine *biography* whatsoever.

Linked with the belief in reincarnation, the doctrine of *karma*, or inevitable and inescapable retribution for one's actions, places the idea of causality at the very center of Indian spiritual life. But in conjunction with the belief in reincarnation, it spread cause and effect so widely apart, by placing them in totally different lives, that they often found themselves on different sides of the dissolution of the personality—and therefore not geared to memory. The continuity of causality was thus disrupted and *karma* assumed a fatalistic tinge that, in point of fact, almost annihilated free will in the Indian devotee, a man who tended to become indolent and passive, who was and is "lived" by a mysterious fate rather than lives. There is a

visible connection between the Upaniṣadic study of consciousness in the waking and dormant states and the idea of reincarnation—the amazing, deathlike change of plane of consciousness when falling asleep, the purely subjective unfolding of illogical dreams emerging out of one another without transition or evident principle of continuity, and the puzzling disappearance of the ego in dreamless sleep. If memory and time are not brought into play, linking yesterday and today, and yet there is a continuity of cause and effect between a forgotten yesterday and today, this can just as well apply to different lives. Death becomes nothing more than a temporary dreamless sleep out of which the miserable soul is called back into a new corporeal envelope, having forgotten all about its past incarnation but crushed under the burden of a mysterious *karma,* of past deeds that have to be paid for.

The concept of reincarnation implies evidently an effort to *escape* from history, to obliterate the accursed Time (*kāla*). It implies a virtual flight from life and consequently a struggle to extinguish desire (*kāma*)—at least earthly life and material desire. The strong sense of time, the justification of history as a divine process, can only be the result of a full acceptance of the fruits of love and lust. This the Indians rejected with horror and always sought for full release (*mokṣa*) through the destruction of all desire, all sentiments, all emotions and attachments, even of sublimated and spiritualized love. The concept of reincarnation implies, furthermore, that one is today what one is, not because past history, society or one's parents have been what they have been and therefore have had an influence on one's being, but only because of one's own past lives and deeds. The metaphysical individualism destroyed the social sense of solidarity between past and present, and even the family solidarity extending from ancestors to offspring. We shall see later on how Indian society organized itself instinctively in order to counteract this dissolving and corrosive outlook.

The *Upaniṣads* contained already all the germs of later philosophies, orthodox and heretic, just as the Reformation in Europe contained most of the seeds of the later rationalism and scepticism. The greatest emphasis was now put on the iron law of *karma,* the offspring of the Vedic Ṛta, that which survives the wrenching of death and rules that man's deeds follow him with rewards and punishments until he escapes from rebirth altogether. As stated in the later

Upaniṣads, karma becomes as automatically and irrevocably mechanical as Newton's universe. And in the world of *karma,* Brahman soon became as useless a concept as the West Christian God in Newton's self-winding universe. And just as Western scepticism and atheism eventually did away with the Almighty altogether, so did the forthcoming materialists, agnostics, Jains and Buddhists dismiss Brahman altogether after India's "Age of Enlightenment." *Karma* took over completely, for a time.

Alongside this development, other side developments branched out of the *Upaniṣads.* One of them was the Sāṁkhya atheism. The opposition between *puruṣa,* the plurality of knowing subjects or spiritual monads, and *prakṛti,* matter and objects of perception, is already suggested. The idea of *māyā* as sheer illusion, the foundation of the later Vedānta doctrine, is hardly sketched at all and is found only in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.*[22] But both doctrines, Sāṁkhya and Vedānta, are outcrops of the vague allusions to a monotheistic outlook, presupposing the simultaneous existence of the Almighty and individual souls. Soon, one or the other outlook had to be adopted exclusively, since the basic monotheistic concept makes no sense if the time-history dimension is ignored completely. And so Sāṁkhya chose the plurality of souls as being the exclusive and eternal reality, while Vedānta chose the all-pervading Godhead as being the sole reality, to the exclusion of individual souls.

But, once again, now and later, complete freedom of thought was maintained in India. Lacking the stringent logic of Classical Greece and the steely framework of Christian dogma (a sublimation of the Roman concept of law) in our Western Culture, Indians were quite free to ponder upon all the great spiritual and metaphysical problems in unconditional liberty. No Indian Socrates was put to death because his opinions did not meet with the approval of his compatriots, nor was there ever an Inquisition. Fierce dogmatism had no place in this immensely disorganized metaphysical outlook in which every psychological disposition, every form of belief or doubt, every emotional make-up could find what it needed and feel perfectly at ease.

The Upaniṣadic era represents the zenith of India's cultural growth. The early enthusiasm and joy of living of the Vedic Aryans, now firmly settled in their new land, was sobered by considerable thoughtfulness and an awareness of the deep sorrow underlying all forms of life. The Indian mind began to crystallize slowly and evolve

new forms of expression perhaps better suited to a more mature outlook. One form of expression that was already in existence during the Vedic period, but now came into full bloom, was the *sūtra*, the quick, short aphorism whose brevity was intended to appeal to intuition rather than the discursive intellect. Rather than being a convenient condensation of doctrine and a mnemonic device, the *sūtra* was designed to shock the student into immediate realization of higher states of being. Its brutal brevity attempted to provoke a change of plane of consciousness at lightning speed.

All this was very well for eager disciples and highly literate men. But the broad masses of the people were also eager for religious knowledge and spiritual guidance. And so the final expression of Indian Culture's literary genius materialized under the form of two gigantic epics, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, both of them fantastic, poetic and rambling (the *Mahābhārata* is eight times as long as the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* combined). These immense compilations seem to embrace all the past of India which the Indians cared to remember in garbled form, a mythical and immensely vivid past which has lived on (and still lives) in their collective unconscious. Both epics are the anonymous works of thousands of humble poets, and the hundred thousand *slokas* of the *Mahābhārata* seem to embrace the whole range of human and superhuman experiences and possibilities. Although composed at a later date, the *Mahābhārata* depicts the end of the great feudal period and its "Hundred Years' War" in which the Vedic chivalry was slaughtered and exterminated. And it was such works as these that conveyed to the bulk of the illiterate people the general philosophy contained in the *Upanisads*. But it conveyed it in concrete and poetic terms, in the guise of historical fiction.

Out of this immense creation emerged one of the most famous and moving poems, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, whose soaring beauty makes it one of the monuments of world literature: "The most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue," said Wilhelm von Humboldt.[23] This "Song of the Blessed" depicts the great battlefield of Kuruksetra, where two armies commanded by relatives stand face to face. Arjuna drives his war chariot between the lines and, horrified at the thought of the forthcoming massacre, wants to call off the battle. Lord Krisna, who assumes temporarily the role of charioteer and incarnates Divine Wisdom, urges him to fight regardless of the consequences, and his speech is

the essence of the *Gītā*, in fact the essence of the Indian code of action: Arjuna must fight because it is his duty as a Kṣatriya, because he is bound by the *karma* of his past. Not to fight now would be a sign of unspeakable weakness, since the evil deed has already been thought and is as good as done. Arjuna cannot shirk his responsibilities, cannot leap across his earthly duties to spiritual self-realization. He has to go inexorably through the mysterious labyrinth of his appointed duties, however evil they may seem to others. Since all actions have a relative and not an absolute value, his sole duty is to consider his own subjective state of mind, not the objective result of his actions such as, for example, the slaughter which he is about to start and which is the sole concern of his victims. War is neither condemned nor sanctioned. It is purely relative, it is life itself. But Arjuna must act in complete detachment, without any desire, indifferent to success or failure: "Toil day and night but sacrifice beforehand the results of thy work," says Kriṣṇa, which is the essence of *karma yoga*: the selfless performance of one's appointed duties.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is both supremely realistic and extremely idealistic, certainly the most acute, penetrating depiction of human nature and true morality, however remote it may seem from our own: "Give thought to nothing but the act, never to its fruits, and let not thyself be seduced by inaction. For him who achieves inward detachment, neither good nor evil exists any longer here below."[24] This may be true in the absolute but it should not fall into unripe ears; and it throws a great deal of light on the Indian concept of morality—a morality afflicted by the same space-induced plurality, according to which there are as many moral codes as appointed stations in life, rather than one common ethical system for all men regardless of position and social function (as in China).

To this, the *Gītā* adds another teaching that gives it a universal appeal by fusing the monistic Godhead with the personal Almighty of theism and prescribes love of the Divine with a religious effusion of incomparable beauty. At this point, the *Gītā* becomes the final synthesis of Brāhmanism, the juxtaposition and emotional harmonization of all its religious doctrines, and remains to this day the holiest of all sacred texts in India. It emphasizes all the basic contents of the Indian world-outlook with remarkable vividness. Lord Kriṣṇa, for example, symbolizes the principle of Divine Incarnation (*avatār*), the supreme spirit become flesh, pouring into the world during the evil phases of the cosmic cycle in order to check evil—but in a spirit

of complete detachment and indifference. This is no unique, never-to-be-repeated Incarnation, but a periodic one; thus it is *outside* history, has no historical meaning whatsoever, in full accord with the prevailing temper of Indian Culture.

And perhaps the supreme thought of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is concerned with a tolerance: "Whatsoever devotee seeks to worship whatsoever divine form [*rūpa*] with fervent faith, I, verily, make that faith of his unwavering." But he does not lose sight of the higher goal, and adds this qualification: "Finite, however, is the fruit of those of little understanding: the worshippers of the gods go to the gods, but My devotees come to Me."[25]

Having reached the zenith of its cultural development with the *Upaniṣads,* Indian Culture started its slow decline in the post-*Upaniṣad* period. It then proceeded through the same historical phases through which every one of the higher Cultures has passed, before and after, and in the same irrevocable sequence. As cultural growth began to lose its wind and the Indian soul began to feel weary, India entered the age of its post-Socratic philosophies, agnostic, atheist, materialistic, and then, as a forerunner of the coming Civilization, practical and utilitarian. This is the great age of transition that lies between the *Upaniṣads* and Buddha, an "Age of Enlightenment" when, for the first and last time in Indian history, the predominant outlook is strictly intellectual, the age when large cities and urban living begin to introduce artificiality in life and thought. The petrifying soul of India became walled-up in the structures of huge cities, cosmopolises like Ujjain and Ayodhyā. The great emotional upsurges of the Culture's springtime are now far behind, in an increasingly remote past which sinks into the oblivion of an ahistorical society. As in Classical Greece, the former vitality and the irresistible urge to trail-blazing creation gradually gives way to devitalization and dry, pedantic ratiocination, logical hairsplitting, dissolving intellectual commentaries and corrosive dissections. Everything is analyzed to death; life and its fruits are no longer taken as a matter of course but become problems. Spiritual awareness fades away, leaving the intelligentsia high and dry on the beach of irreligiousness. Indian intellect now rebelled against the old faith and mysticism, and turned against the unconditional acceptance of the *Vedas'* spiritual authority and divine origin.

All this took place in the midst of growing political and social

unrest. Most of the intellectual rebels and revolutionaries arose in eastern India, on the fringes of the Brāhamaṇical Holy Land; and most of them were Kṣatriyas or patronized by Kṣatriyas, at first. Did not France's nobility patronize all those intellectual movements that were eventually going to lead to its own undoing? They were all drawing the logical conclusions of the Upaniṣadic "Reformation" and pushing all theories to their logical, ultimate, and of course, absurd conclusions. It was an age of great philosophical enquiries, doubt, scepticism, confusion and eventually demoralization. The great political and social convulsions of the near furture were already rumbling from one end of the Indian world to the other: "Loud complaints were heard about the degeneracy of the age, the lust of princes, and the greed of men."[26]

As in Greece, there were idealistic and materialistic schools of philosophy, epicureans, cynics, sophists, and stoics. Some believed in eternity and an unlimited universe, others followed the Lokayāta ("belonging to the world of sense"), a materialistic doctrine that stated that nothing existed save atoms. They based all knowledge on perception and rejected inference, and denied categorically any form of life after death. To the Lokayātikas, the *Vedas* were only the "idle prating of knaves, characterized by the three faults of untruthfulness, internal contradiction and useless repetition."[27] As for the ritual of the Brāhmins, it was nothing but a pious fraud. Their doctrine can be summed up as follows: matter thinks, there is no other world and death ends it all. Others, such as the Tarkikas (rationalists) were materialists but admitted the sanctity of the *Vedas*.

Maskarin Gosāla, on the other hand, was a fatalistic rationalist who compiled a systematic encyclopedia of the known universe and whose doctrine (like that of the forthcoming Jains) was probably "derived from some main tradition of pre-Aryan natural science and psychology."[28] His followers, the famous Ājivikas, were utter fatalists who claimed that no amount of virtue and asceticism could hasten or shorten the natural biological process of rebirths, that goodness did not help toward the final release; this was a pseudoscientific determinism, as implacable as has ever been conceived by man. Each life-monad, in this system, is compelled to proceed through eighty-four thousand births; and, Calvinist-like, it claimed that although good works did nothing to hasten the hour of final release, they were milestones on the predetermined road to liberation, implying that the hour of deliverance was at hand—but contributing nothing to

the deliverance itself. Pious deeds and thoughts, and morality in general, were not causes pregnant with good effects, but simply results of an inevitable evolution.

There were also the Tīrthankaras, or "ford makers," who claimed to have discovered new paths. The *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* mentions many others who later fell into oblivion: the Nigganṭhas, or fetter-free; the nihilistic Nāstikas; the heretical Pāṣaṇḍas. And we find also men like Sanjaya, the sceptic who rejected all possibility of the knowledge of self; Ajita Kesakambalin, the utter materialist; Purāṇa Kāśyapa, the amoral cynic; the hedonist Kakuda Kātyāyana; and countless other such representatives of an age of mental chaos.[29] We Westerners, who have been proceeding through such an age, know something about this general atmosphere of intellectual confusion. There were no limits to the outright cynicism of many of those thinkers. Apocryphal stories mention the philosopher Virocana, who preached that "One's self is to be made happy here on earth. One's self is to be waited upon. He who makes himself happy here on earth, who waits upon himself, obtains both worlds, this world and the next."[30] It was the age of the "pursuit of happiness." And outright nihilists brought their own contribution to this growing demoralization; one of Bṛhaspati's *sūtras* has come down to us which runs:

> No heaven exists, no final liberation
> No soul, no other world, no rites . . .[31]

There is plenty of evidence that several of the later orthodox schools of philosophy—Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Purva-Mīmāṁsā—started out in those days as atheistic doctrines and were, later on, dressed up as religious doctrines to suit the mood of an Indian Civilization reverting to the religious outlook of its forebears.[32]

By now, philosophic ratiocination and hairsplitting, endless fruitless speculation about the nature of the soul, God and the universe, gradually brought about a feeling of general lassitude and revulsion. There was just too much of it. The *Brahmajālasutta* mentions sixty-two philosophic doctrines and theories expounded in the days of Buddha himself,[33] the historical equivalent of which was the age of the "Hundred Schools" of philosophy in contemporary China. This growing intellectualism divorced from emotional life among a large part of the Indian intelligentsia eventually led to a feeling that metaphysics in general was useless, even repellent. Indian Culture was now coming to the end of its creative possibilities, grinding to a stop,

exhausted. Before entering its Civilization stage, in the sorrowful autumn of Culture, two men arose who symbolized and summed up the feeling of revulsion against religion, metaphysics and the boundless optimism which sustained religious faith, who both belonged to the nihilistic Nāstika movement, who were both noble Ksatriyas and by essence anti-Brāhmin, who both sewed up and terminated the Culture-phase of India history: Gautama Buddha and Mahāvīra.

V

The Twilight of Culture: Buddha

BETWEEN the time of the *Upaniṣads* and the birth of Buddha, far-reaching changes had taken place in India. The Modern Age implied, as it did in the evolution of every other society, the birth of great states and of fierce nationalism. As usual, the greatest states develop on the geographical margin of the Culture's homeland—in the present case, in eastern India, where new rulers raised themselves above the royal dignity and assumed the imperial title of *Sāmrājah* (or *Samrāṭ*) as they began to absorb their weaker neighbors.

The formation of great nations entailed, as it did in contemporary Chou China or in post-Renaissance Europe, the progressive disappearance of smaller states and kingdoms. Although the post-Vedic *Brāhmaṇas* mention a number of new independent nations (Kalinga in modern Orissa, Avanti in modern Mālwa, Surāshtra in Kāṭhiāwār, Mūlaka on the upper Godāvarī), it became clear that India was entering the era of superstates and imperialism. Early Buddhist texts mention sixteen Great Powers as dividing among them most of the Indian world: Anga (east Bihār), Kāsī (Benares), Kosala (Oudh), Chedi (on the Jumna), Vṛiji (north Bihār), Malla (Gorakhpur), Vatsa (Allahabad), Kuru (Delhi), Panchāla (Bareilly), Matsya (Jaipur), Sūrasena (Mathura), Asmaka (Godāvarī), Avanti (Mālwa), Gandhāra (Peshāwār), Kamboja (South Kashmir and Kafiristan), and finally the greatest power of all potentially, the budding "Rome" of India, the great kingdom of Magadha in modern South Bihār. The center of political gravity slowly shifted to the east and the relatively peaceful days of the *Ancien Régime* were coming to an end. India was entering an era of international conflicts and social struggles on an unprecedented scale.

Not all the Great Powers were kingdoms. A number of them were republics: the Vṛiji state (or Vajjian Confederacy) that overthrew

the absolute rule of the Videha monarchy shortly before the rise of Buddhism, was a *gaṇa*, a republic ruled by popular assemblies. And so was the state of Malla, another Great Power. Some smaller states, such as the Kṣudraka republic (Oxydrakai to the Greeks) were ruled by aristocratic oligarchies. Greek authors stated, in the forthcoming days of Alexander the Great, that "the Kṣudrakas, who sent a hundred and fifty of their most eminent men to negotiate terms, pleaded their special attachment to freedom and self-government from the most ancient times."[1] There was a plethora of small republican states —Sākya, Bharga and Maurya, for instance—and small federations or confederations of the "Swiss" type, city-states, "protectorates" and colonies. They all had their parliaments (*pariṣad*) in which decisions had to be carried unanimously or, to avoid a tyranny of the majority, referred to objective and impartial arbitration by experts. Executive power was in the hands of elected *Gaṇa-Rājahs* or *Saṃghamukhya*, equivalent to Roman consuls or Greek archons.[2] The trend toward republican and democratic government was in evidence all through this era; many *ancien régimes* were coming to an end. Megasthenes, later Greek ambassador to the Mauryan court, "records the tradition heard by him that sovereignty was dissolved and democratic government set up in various places."[3] But republican institutions could no longer cope with the new social, political and economic problems of the Modern Age. Their executive powers were too weak to compete successfully with the concentrated power of decision of great monarchs and, as in Greece, they eventually had to knuckle down under the rule of more powerful "Macedonian" nations.

There were even great differences in the forms of kingship. In the older part of Hindustan, in the Indus Valley and western India in general, kingship had become "constitutional" and real power in times of peace was in the hands of a senate. The social structure in western Indian states was still predominantly aristocratic, and political power was usually in the hands of noble Brāhmins and Kṣatriyas. In eastern India, on the other hand, in the comparatively newly settled lands of the Gangetic plains, social democracy had made great progress and lowly Sūdras had acquired supreme power in the area of the lower Ganges. Constitutional monarchy prevailed in western India because the upper classes were still powerful enough to check the authority of their rulers; but in eastern India we already have the germs of democratic Caesarism and all-powerful executives—old-fashioned aristocratic Rājahs in the west, autocratic and imperialistic Sāmrājahs (often of Sūdra extraction) in the east.

Soon enough, the sixteen Great Powers were reduced to four through wars, revolutions and political absorption: Avanti, Kosala and Vatsa, and of course, Magadha. This was an era, not only of superstates, but of huge cities with their cosmopolitan populations, uprooted proletariats and new middle classes. There were colossal towns like Ujjain, the capital of Avanti, and Ayodhyā, capital of Kosala. And slightly smaller cities like Champā, Rājagriha, Sāketa and Benares: "These cities contained pleasure parks, streets lighted with torches and watered, assembly halls, gambling houses, courts of justice, booths for traders and work-places of artisans."[4] The capital city of Magadha was shifted, in later days, to Pataliputra, a colossal city probably larger than Imperial Rome at the height of its extension. And from now on (sixth and fifth centuries B.C.) the history of the Indian world is largely the history of the rise of Magadha to world dominion—as the contemporary history of China was the rise to power of Ch'in or, a few centuries later in the Classical world, that of Rome. Before that, however, and symbolic of their new status, both Kosala and Magadha were the main scenes of the activities of the Mahāvīra and Gautama Buddha. The kingdom of Kosala, almost as large as modern France, was, however, already declining and was soon to become the "Carthage" to Magadha's "Rome."

Although the Magadhan nation was as old as the later *Vedas*, it remained a small state for many centuries. Just as Rome was geographically remote from the great centers of Greek Culture or Ch'in was on the very geographical margin of Chou China, so was Magadha far away in the east, in the new lands, remote from the great centers where Indian Culture was in full development, i.e., the famed "middle country" of the Kurus and Panchālas. It was essentially a "barbarian" country, its population mixed, only partly Aryanized by the renegade *Vrātyas,* and incompletely Brāhmanized. Yet the Magadhans seem to have looked down with contempt on the more cultured, but also probably more effete, westerners. Brāhmins and Kṣatriyas in Magadha were spoken of in derisive tones as *Brahma-bandhu* and *Kṣatra-bandhu,* that is, "so-called Brāhmins" and "so-called Kṣatriyas."[5] One can sense that the Magadhans were addicted to a certain form of "social democracy" which did not countenance the aristocratic class distinctions of older states and societies. However, economic efficiency seems to have been the keynote of Magadhan life: roads and causeways, irrigation canals and dams,

granaries, everything was built faster and on a larger scale than in other states. And yet, conscious of their cultural inferiority, many young men from Magadha were sent out of the state to faraway Takṣaśīla in the northwestern state of Gandhāra, to finish their education—very much as young Romans went to Athens to complete their studies.

The true founder of Magadhan greatness was Bimbisāra, probably a contemporary of Gautama Buddha. Bimbisāra was the first great, conscious and deliberate imperialist ruler of India. Like the state of Ch'in in distant China, his kingdom was in a favorable geographical setting, "protected on all sides by mountains and rivers."[6] Trade and commerce seems to have been more important to the Magadhan state than it was to the other Indian nations, because it was situated astride two of the greatest international trade routes of the Indian world: fluvial navigation on the Ganges and the land route through the important agglomeration of Gaya. The chief source of iron in those days was in South Bihār and control of the trade route was in Magadhan hands. But that was not all. A keen military man, Bimbisāra seems to have been the first ruler to discover the fighting potential of the armored war elephants, the heavy "tanks" of those days. He was soon in a position to invade and conquer the neighboring state of Anga. Having thus established his military reputation, he was then able, thanks to shrewd matrimonial alliances, to expand the Magadhan state peacefully toward the north, as far as the borders of modern Nepal. In order to rule this much greater Magadhan Empire, he then proceeded to set up an efficient and centralized administration, with a bureaucracy devoted to carrying out his instructions to the letter.

His successor Ajātasatru pursued his imperialistic policy, destroyed and absorbed the small republics lying on the northern and northwestern borders of the Magadhan Empire, smashed the Vṛiji nation (Great Power though it was) and annexed its whole territory, mutilated but failed to destroy Kosala, another Great Power.

Magadha now stood, if not quite foremost among the Great Powers of the Indian world, at least as one of them. India was all set for the great world wars which would bring forth Caesarism and the Universal Empire. The old aristocratic ruling classes who had become decadent courtiers, the *ratnins* or "jewel bearers," were fast losing prestige and power; ancient legitimate dynasties were being overthrown by revolutions. Kākavarṇa, the last legitimate ruler of

Magadha, was tragically murdered and a low-class usurper by the name of Mahāpadma—"sovereign of an infinite host" and "possessed of a terrible army," claim the Buddhist scriptures—a truly Napoleonic figure, seized the throne. Jain writers point out that he was born on the lowest rung of the social ladder, being the son of a barber and a courtesan. And almost his first political move was to exterminate all the aristocratic Kṣatriyas he could lay his hands on, thus accentuating the equalitarian trend of an already social-democratic Magadhan state and crushing all opposition to his dietatorial rule. It was now truly the end of India's *ancien régime*.

Imperialism and military power were not the only claims to fame of Magadha. The most far-reaching contribution of Magadha to Indian history was the fact that it played host to Jains and Buddhists, providing them with their first converts, then with their most powerful patrons, and thus helped to shatter the already badly mauled prestige of the Brāhmins. And with the appearance of the two founding fathers of these great movements and the subsequent spread of Buddhism throughout India and India's overseas spheres of influence, we have the swan song of Indian Culture—and the dawn of Indian Civilization.

Gautama Buddha has been erroneously compared to Jesus Christ or Muhammad in his capacity as founder of one of the world's greatest religions, a thoroughly inadequate and confusing analogy. The vast movement initiated by Gautama was by no means a Protestant Reformation, nor was it a puritan movement; it was not even a religion at all, in the usual emotional and devotional sense of the word. India's Protestant "Reformation" had already taken place as early as the eighth century B.C. when the *Upaniṣads* were being created. And although such movements as Jainism and Buddhism are indubitably outgrowths of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads,* just as Europe's rationalism, skepticism and materialism were offshoots of Calvin and Luther, the doctrines of Gautama Buddha and the Mahāvīra represent the end-of-Culture sentiment of an exhausted society. Both Jains and Buddhists rejected the divine origin of the *Vedas,* symbolically cutting themselves off in fear and repulsion from the joyous, vigorous and life-affirming hymns dedicated to the praise of life and action: thus does the autumn look back with regret and bitter sorrow at the youthful springtime, and then turns around and faces the inevitability of historical death. With the rise of Jainism

and Buddhism, Indian Culture in decline experienced an immense de-souling.

Gautama Buddha's was a purely practical, utilitarian, end-of-the-world expression of a society threatened with cultural sterility, a revulsion also against intellectual speculations; it was the final, rationalized expression of Brāhmanism's world-sentiment, without its lofty idealism and deprived of its soaring metaphysical structure. We are not concerned here with the subsequent developments of Buddhism but with the movement at its inception, with the profound meaning of Buddha's life and personal teaching. His true historical analogies are therefore collective end-of-Culture movements such as the Stoa of Classical Greece and Rome, the Mohists and Legalists of China, the rationalist Mu'tazila of Islam, or the complex movements, doctrines and trends that have appeared in the "late" Culture of the West: agnosticism and skepticism, positivism, pragmatism, socialism, as well as existentialism and psychoanalysis, all of which correspond to one or another facet of Gautama's doctrine. Gautama himself was but one of many similar *Sannyāsins* who gave up the world in their youth to adopt the wandering life of ascetic mendicants searching for truth. He was the greatest but by no means the unique figure of his kind, and one of his contemporaries, Mahāvīra, might have outshone him, had it not been for his more metaphysical, impractical, imprecise and even more profoundly pessimistic doctrine.

Mahāvira followed the usual procedure by reaching omniscience through mystical illumination at an early age and, henceforth, returning to the world—which most mystics, except in times of great historical change, fail to do—he preached a strange doctrine which fluctuated uncertainly between pantheism and atheism. However, he stated unequivocally the duality of spirit and matter, two eternal and antagonistic principles. Indeed, it was extended by him to the whole of creation, organic and inorganic. Before he died in Patna, Mahāvīra had founded the Jain sect, which still numbers more than a million adherents today, and to whom the whole of nature, wind, fire, water, minerals, plants and animals, is gifted with soulfulness although there is no God or Godhead and no universal soul. The whole life of a Jain is imbued with the doctrine of *ahiṁsā*, non-violence, utter respect for every form of life: the true Jain strains every drop of water before drinking it for fear of hurting any form of life swimming in it, just as he veils his mouth to avoid inhaling insects. Jain-

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ism, although partaking of the world-negating and humanitarian mood of the times, was too extreme and impractical to have any lasting success.

But as a sign of the times, Jainism was just as important as Buddha's doctrine in its "absolute refusal to life's lure. Here is no bending of the cosmic forces to the will of man, but on the contrary, a relentless shelling off of cosmic forces, whether those of the external universe, or those that pulse in the running of the blood."[7] This was, of course, the exact opposite of the world-affirming, joyous, dynamic spirit of the *Vedas*. Both Mahāvīra and Gautama Buddha were of non-Aryan stock, probably descendants of the pre-Aryan dwellers of the Indian plains who were not connected with the great Brāhmanic tradition. There is hardly any doubt that they are only the most illustrious figures of a vast movement of reaction against the Aryan Vedic tradition;[8] and as early as the *Upaniṣads* there was already a movement similar to that of the European Renaissance, that is, a resurgence of pre-Aryan ideas, concepts and feelings, some undoubtedly representing elements of the submerged Harappā Civilization, just as the European Renaissance used the elements of the deceased Classical Greco-Roman Civilization in its emancipation from Gothic fetters. In this sense, these heterodox doctrines certainly represented a mighty upsurge of non-Aryan forces that had not been absorbed into the Vedic structure.

The main difference between Buddha and the Jain tradition rests on the more or less metaphysical character of the latter with its complex cosmology, its life-monads, subtle karmic influx and other such abstruse speculations on the nature of man and the universe. With the decline of Culture, however, and the approach of Civilization, men begin to lose all interest in metaphysics and in philosophy for its own sake. Utilitarianism and practical ethics take over; morality outgrows its dependent status and, from being merely a part and consequence of a whole philosophic outlook, absorbs in its turn the religion and philosophy which formerly included it. The buoyant vitality of Vedic man prompted him to peer into the workings of the universe; the mature intelligence of Upaniṣadic man prompted him to deepen his psychological insight, relate man to the universe and understand the origins and goal of life. But man in Buddha's time is no longer interested in anything save his own self and his own self-realization. There is no more wonderment at the sight of the universe, no more joy of living, no more disinterested speculation on

man's destiny—nothing but mental confusion and cultural exhaustion. All this was bound to doom Jainism, even though it was a striking symbol of its time. Its humanitarianism, *ahiṁsā,* like all such humanitarian feelings in other societies, is inevitably the sign of an end-of-Culture sentiment. And even though Jainism belonged fully to its age by opposing all metaphysical theories that were not conducive to ethical responsibility, as a historical movement it was relatively a failure.

Gautama Buddha, on the other hand, symbolized to the point of perfection the twilight mood of his time, the exhaustion of an overworked Culture and the sheer disgust at metaphysical speculation. Like the Stoics of Greece, Buddha closed the era of cultural growth and prefaced the coming of Civilization. Like the Legalists of China he rebelled, or at least provided the weapons with which the traditional social order of the cultural period would be overthrown for a time, before reasserting itself thereafter for thousands of years of civilized petrifaction. In many respects, Buddha adopted the atheist and rationalist views of the Sāṁkhya philosophy and added to it the virtual nihilism of the Nāstika movement. And although, like most of his contemporaries and historical equivalents, he repudiated the religious and political symbols of his Culture's springtime, this repudiation used the same forms and same philosophic language as that of the rejected Culture.

Gautama's doctrine contained no theology, no metaphysics; it was essentially logic, psychology and practical ethics—what is important is not a knowledge of the structure of the universe but one's relations with the universe. The great metaphysical doctrines of latter-day Buddhism were added (*abidhamma*) subsequently to Gautama's original teaching (*Dhamma*). Being no world-improver, Buddha (not his Buddhist followers) was not the least concerned with the general welfare of society, with politics, art or science. His teaching was essentially psychological, dedicated to the liberation of the individual human being alone. Summed up in the "Four Aryan Truths," this doctrine teaches the existence of suffering, the cause of suffering, the possibility of suppressing suffering and the way to suppress suffering. This remarkable emphasis placed on suffering as such brings out in bold relief the striking pessimism which pervades Gautama's whole philosophy: suffering always outweighs pleasure, sorrow predominates over happiness, the negative always outbalances the posi-

tive. Buddha's dramatic vision of the timeless cosmic agony in his Fire Sermon is worth quoting: "All is in flames. The eye and all the senses stand in flames, kindled by the fire of love, by the fire of hate, by the fire of delusion; through birth, ageing and death, through pain and lamentations, through sorrow, suffering and despair is the fire kindled."[9] The essence of Buddha's doctrine is to provide a fire extinguisher.

The true relationship between the Brāhmin and Buddha is unmistakably similar to that between a Roman Catholic confessor and a modern psychoanalyst. The profoundly utilitarian character of the doctrine, the drab residue left after the lofty altruism and idealism of a living Culture has departed, has been accurately discerned by a modern Indian scholar who asserts that "this represents the application of current medical science to the healing of the spiritually sick. The good physician seeing everyman in pain, proceeds to diagnosis: he reflects upon the cure and commends the necessary regime to the patient—this is the history of the life of Gautama."[10] Buddha represents the old age of Indian Culture, the worn-out body which suffers in all its joints from old age and disease, which is now dedicated to one task, and one task only: the extinction of suffering, and therefore of life itself.

Long before he reached his famous illumination under the *bodhi* tree, Gautama's fame had spread "like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the skies." Although his heart was not in it, Gautama's great intelligence and iron will had taken him through the usual fasting, sleeplessness and self-torment that had become commonplace in an India overrun by hermits and ascetics. He soon outgrew the ascetic stage of his life, but had vividly illustrated the main characteristic of Indian soul searching: all Indian thinkers looked upon themselves as living laboratories to be experimented upon, as complete units in which the physiological played as much part as the purely mental, the intuitive far greater than the discursive logic of the intellect. Gautama followed in the wake of his predecessors, retracing all the steps of Indian Culture's progress toward self-consciousness, summing up for future generations all the techniques invented by former mystics, and ruthlessly discarding everything that was not intimately connected with the selfishly personal, therapeutic interests of the individual.

Delivering his first sermon in Benares' Deer Park on "Setting in motion the wheel of righteousness," Buddha began to freeze into a

cold, logical, practical system the paradoxical conclusions reached by Indian Culture. Insisting on the impermanence of all contingent things, on the never-ending flux and ceaseless becoming, he crystallized the causality of *karma* into a rigidly mechanical system from which there was no escape, although it did not conflict with the individual's free will. Since there is no Brahman and no Ātman, no Godhead whatsoever, no world-soul nor first cause, there is no room for emotion or feeling, for love, pity or mercy. Cool logic and reason guide us to knowledge and final liberation: "Rationality is the platform on which Truth stands. No truth is attainable without Reason."[11] And so, only reason can set the inexorable mechanism of *karma* on a new course which is more favorable to our eventual enlightenment and disintegration into the void of *nirvāṇa,* the blessed goal of all our efforts.

As time went on and Gautama's doctrine became more elaborate, his opposition to contemporary Brāhmanism became more pronounced. But it is now clear, in the light of historical research, that he did not, or did not want to, notice the remarkable similarity between his teaching and the inner core of Brāhmanism, as understood and practiced by the most enlightened Brāhmins of the day. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for this was that all Brāhmanic literature was expounded in Sanskrit, by then a language that was as dead as Church Latin is today. In the sixth century B.C., when Buddha preached, the masses spoke vernacular languages derived from Sanskrit, the Prākrits. The incipient nationalism of India's Modern Age had probably affected the early linguistic unity as the similar historical evolution affected the Latin unity of Europe; the Prākrits developed more or less like Europe's Romance languages developed out of Latin. We find that at the time of Buddha most states and nations had their own Prākrit, and the revolutionary thinkers and preachers discarded Sanskrit altogether. It seems probable that Buddha himself taught in Māgadhī, the vernacular Prākrit of the Magadhan nation, but most of Buddhism's sacred texts were later preserved in Pāli, the most important of all the Prākrits. On the other hand, the sacred language of the Jains remained a sort of hybrid lingua franca derived from Māgadhī, known as Ardha-māgadhī. Confusion of languages compounded the mental confusion of the times and inevitably involved the new religious creeds and doctrines with the social and political movements of the times.

At any rate, it is now clear that, far from being a reformer or the

conscious founder of a new religion, Gautama Buddha was in fact *terminating* the historical development of Brāhmanism. The opposition between them was not really based on religious or doctrinal differences. It was the esoteric, hermetic nature of the Brāhmin's teachings that irritated the great thinkers, rather than the substance of these teachings; the attempted monopoly and class consciousness of the clergy and its tolerance of all forms of popular superstitions and polytheistic practices revolted an intelligentsia attracted by Buddha. Gautama merely "democratized" the esoteric teaching of the Brāhmins, most of whom had long ago adopted his own agnostic, nihilistic, end-of-Culture sentiment. Eventually, however, it was the social problem that proved to be the main stumbling block in the path of Buddhism's triumphant sweep through India. During the phase of transition from Culture to Civilization, Gautama's doctrine benefited from the democratic movements that were sweeping away the *ancien régimes*. Social fluidity had never been as great as it was then—and never was again. Then, "Princes, priests and peddlers ate together and intermarried. Brāhmins and Kṣatriyas took to trade and menial work."[12] But the racial problem became increasingly acute and stood in the path of social democracy, and therefore of Buddhism. But all this was still in the womb of the future.

Buddha was an uncompromising enemy of all human weaknesses, of all compromises, of all debasement of metaphysical truths to the level of religious emotionalism, and he directed most of his mellow scorn toward popular Brāhmanism. He preached to men of high mental caliber who would not flinch under the pessimistic impact of his hard message. Being socially excluded from the very inner sanctum of Brāhmanism, he refused to acknowledge the psychological necessity of a catholic religion that preserved a vital link between the lowest animist and the loftiest philosopher. The error committed by all those who, later on, were to compare Buddha's doctrine with Brāhmanism sprang from the belief that the Enlightened One taught a new religion, comparable to the Vedic-Upaniṣadic growth of a thousand years, instead of seeing in him the actual *culmination* of the whole growth. His doctrine is the pronouncement of a single man whose rational mind was able to eliminate contradictions and paradoxes, and co-ordinate all the remaining elements of the coherent structure with unflinching logic. The inconsistencies of the *Upaniṣads* are of a historical nature, no more contradictory than the various, interlocked world pictures of the child who grows up to

manhood and deepens his understanding as he grows older. Buddha himself knew that he was in the mainstream of Indian thought and never claimed to be the founder of a new religion; but he thought that he was a restorer of true Upaniṣadic doctrine, whereas in fact he merely continued and terminated it—in a purely ethical and logical sense.

In fact, Buddha did what the Brāhmins had wisely refused to do: he broke decisively with the myth-world of early Vedism and opened a wide gap between the religious polytheism of the masses and the intellectual leadership of his day. In this respect, and up to a point only, he duplicated the Hellenic rejection of the Olympian pantheon by the post-Socratic philosophers of Greece, creating the same unbearable solution of continuity which seared the Classical soul—both movements ending in a triumphant reaction in both cases. But in the Classical world, the religious reawakening took place *outside* Classical Civilization; it was siphoned into the new Prophetic religions of the Middle East (the old Classical polytheism having been effectively destroyed by the Greco-Romans themselves). In India, on the other hand, the religious reawakening took place *within* the framework of Indian Civilization and re-established a new Brāhmanism purged of many of its former deficiencies, known as Hinduism.

The fact that Buddhism spread far and wide over India for many centuries must not make us forget that Brāhmanism survived side by side with it, remaining vigorous and retaining to a great extent its hold on the masses—just as Roman Catholicism, in spite of shattering blows dealt to it for centuries, is still remarkably alive today. It was at all times difficult for Buddhism to establish itself as a separate religion because of its purely ethical doctrine which never satisfied the masses; more than one Buddhist family would unhesitatingly call on Brāhmins for all main ceremonies at birth, marriage and death. And it could not really fight the octopuslike embrace of the many-armed Brāhmanism and the immense tolerance of the Indian cultural atmosphere.

Although early Buddhism aptly symbolized the pessimistic, nihilistic mood of the times, the more constructive and optimistic outlook of the Indian masses remained vigorous. It is therefore in psychological disposition more than in point of doctrinal differences that the fundamental opposition between Gautama's system and Brāhmanism began to take shape. Words are at all times deceptive, and their real

meaning often lies in the heart of men rather than on their lips. Ascetic and intellectually weary, Buddha always emphasized the negative aspect of identical spiritual truths propounded by the Brāhmins with more optimism.

On transmigration, for instance, he insisted that "there is rebirth of character but no transmigration of self. No ego-entity is transferred though thought-forms reappear."[13] Elsewhere he stated that "there is a path to walk on, there is walking being done, but there is no traveller. There are deeds being done but there is no doer."[14] The total, useless vanity of the ego which the best Brāhmins perceived after years of study and meditation was stated intellectually by Buddha in stinging, provocative sentences destined to shock the audience out of its complacency into an immediate awareness of the futility and emptiness of all contingent things. But he always added the peculiar coldness of his doctrine's "lack of sympathy with human nature."[15] Early Buddhist literature was filled with a searing contempt for man and the world, for life and love. And it is just as plain that the abstract concept of *causality* as the fundamental principle of the phenomenal world, the inexorable and never-ending succession of cause and effect, was more firmly grasped by Gautama than by any Indian thinker before his time. The supreme existential reality is change and the cause-and-effect sequence. He saw no permanent Being, nothing but an evanescent Becoming that had to be overcome by the suffering patient longing for annihilation.

He expressed his overriding concept of implacable, mechanical causality by stating that "It is said that the Absolute has created us. But that which is Absolute cannot be a cause. All things around us come from a cause as the plant comes from a seed; but how can the Absolute be the cause of all things alike? If it pervades them, then, certainly, it does not make them."[16] Intellectual causality, a limited instrument of man's discursive logic, with which to apprehend only a limited portion of the visible universe, became the sole tool at his disposal. Sometimes, as in Western Culture, for long under a Cartesian spell, it is to affirm the sole reality of what is rationally understandable and logically demonstrated. Other times, as in Indian Culture, it is to deny all reality and recognize only an *existential* quality to a causality that will lead, if rightly understood, to blissful annihilation.

During the growth of a Culture, any Culture, even one as ahistorical as the Indian, man is aware of considerable changes, of steady

development, and therefore is conscious of time as an element of overriding importance and of historical evolution, even if, as in the Indian Culture, he immediately congeals the moving stream of history into timeless myths. He realizes, then, that although every occurrence in the spatial world has a *cause,* everything in the stream of time has a *past.* Causality and discursive logic cannot explain everything so long as historical growth proceeds unabated and religious feeling takes up where the intellect has, perforce, to give up. Motion, development, action and striving are enjoyed for their own sake as man instinctively feels that the spiritual essence resides in what is alive and striving, not in what is dead and motionless. But when the cultural growth slows down and then stops through sheer exhaustion, when the soul of the Culture departs, the intellect steps in decisively, cancels time and historical development and extends the realm of causality to the spiritual world—if it still recognizes its existence—as well as to the material universe. The intuitive idea which guides and inspires the directional movement of life toward the infinite and unattainable, is replaced by the more intellectual and mechanical concept of "ends and means" directed toward a practical, therapeutic end. Religion then becomes a medley of medical or psychoanalytical recipes; there is no longer any need for the Divine. Buddha can then declare that the "Consciousness of the I" does not reside in a universal superego, as the Brāhmins assert, but is only a transitory phenomenon arising by way of cause and effect.

In many ways, therefore, Buddha represents the most important facet of this particular stage of Indian Culture, but without ever obliterating the other surviving elements of Brāhmanism. They interpenetrated each other ceaselessly and, to a great extent, Gautama's influence was to remain as indelible on future Hinduism as it was on Buddhism itself—if not more so, when one realizes how far from Gautama's original teaching Mahāyāna was going to go. It is almost impossible to separate, from a doctrinal standpoint, Buddhist and Brāhmin thought, and they both remained inextricably woven into each other's fabric. Gautama was simply the most articulate exponent of Indian Culture's historic decline. There is profound psychological insight in Buddha's doctrine, a penetrating study of the unconscious, *vidhimutta* (free from process), sharply distinct from *vidhicitta* (waking consciousness), both of which are separated by *manodvāra,* the razor-edged threshold of consciousness. But all of this can be found, differently worded, in the holy writings of Brāh-

manism from which he borrowed heavily. And it would be pointless
to push Buddha's logic too far; it dissolves under the strain and
points plainly to the willful, almost pathological nihilism of his doc-
trine. Only sick men feel their limbs and organs; Buddha's teaching
is an eloquent witness to the mental sickness of an Indian Culture
in decline.

Basically identical in their over-all philosophical assumptions,
Brāhmanism and Buddhism split along psychological lines. Bud-
dhism, cold-hearted, utilitarian and selfish (from a worldly view-
point), strongly discouraged "useless" philosophical speculation.
Brāhmanism remained passionately interested in the ultimate cause
of all things, in searching for the meaning of life and for the riddle
of cosmic creation, even though it was ultimately almost as life-ne-
gating as Buddhism. It was all a matter of emphasis, of psychological
attitude toward the same, identical world-picture. Buddha's doctrine
remained a stern, ascetic and slightly contemptuous therapy for the
use of those "stoic" products of a petrifying Culture who forgot the
generous advice of the *Bhagavad Gītā:* "Let not him that knoweth
much awaken doubt in slower men of lesser wit."[17]

Some modern Indians have wondered: "Why was it that Bud-
dhism resulted in the growth of otherworldliness in India far more
than in some other countries where it flourished for long periods—
in China, Japan and Burma?"[18] Historical perspective provides the
answer: latter-day Buddhism, especially Mahāyāna, had very little
in common with the spirit of Gautama's original teaching, with the
weary end-of-Culture atmosphere in which he lived. His name re-
mained stamped on symbols which, after many centuries of historical
development, no longer represented his own world-outlook and that,
mostly because of his overpowering personality, of his real genius.
Having disposed of all the paradoxes that plagued intellectual Brāh-
manism, he had extracted the essence of its philosophy and left it
to his disciples and successors to add endless accretions. His great
successes in India during and after his lifetime were due to political
and social causes; when the same political and social elements turned
against Buddhism later on, the doctrine was doomed in India. But,
at the same time, Buddhism was an "exportable" Brāhmanism, ex-
portable precisely because it had detached itself completely from all
those ritual, social and political implications that were so tightly
woven into the very fabric of Brāhmanism but had no place outside
the borders of India. This "exportable" Buddhism, however, could

not travel just as a negative and pessimistic philosophy; it had to become a religion. Only thus can the amazing metamorphosis of the negative, pessimistic, rationalistic, agnostic teaching of Gautama into the highly emotional, positive, optimistic and religious Mahāyāna of future times be explained.

As a historical phenomenon, Buddha must be separated with utmost rigor from subsequent Buddhist developments. His appeal to his contemporaries was based on values that were more temporary and local than eternal and universal. The subsequent world-wide appeal of his doctrine, especially in China and Japan, was due to the fact that he had oversimplified and made accessible to alien minds the essence of Indian philosophic thought, at the time the most profound that had ever been expounded on this earth. But in the last centuries B.C. in India, Buddha represented something quite different; his teaching fell upon the ears of men who fled from the struggle for existence, who longed for annihilation into the absolute void of nothingness; and to his contemporaries he presented a wonderful picture of Indian Culture's setting sun in the twilight hour, offered them the hope of eternal rest and blessed dissolution and promised that soon, very soon, all would be overcome forever.

For forty-five years, Gautama Buddba preached and converted thousands until the fateful day came when the "Lamp of Wisdom was blown out by the wind of Impermanence." Soon after the Master's death, during the reign of Ajātasatru, ruler of Magadha, a council of the *Sangha,* the company of brethren who followed in his footsteps, was convened at Rājagṛha in the state of Magadha to crystallize his teaching into a permanent doctrine. The political and social background of the whole movement was then brought forth with striking speed. Democratic procedures prevailed at the meeting, where the Buddhist clergy was under the control of the laymen and where Buddha's ceaseless admonishment to his monks—"Will such behavior please the people?"[19]—was constantly recalled. In fact, at all times, the democratic character of the expanding Buddhist organization was quite remarkable. It was certainly due, in part at least, to the fact that Gautama Buddha himself came from the Sākya republic and that his democratic sentiments were never concealed. He is even said to have been partial to republican institutions (even though he preached mostly in the autocratic Magadhan Empire) and to have repeatedly warned the Vṛiji republic that it was under constant

threat if its citizens did not attend faithfully to the affairs of state.[20] His warning was probably not heeded, after all, since the Vṛiji nation let itself be conquered and destroyed by Ajātasatru shortly after. In any case, all Buddhist organizations were managed by general meetings, with a complex paraphernalia of standing orders and procedures very similar to a modern business' board of directors' meeting. The only difference is that, faithful to Indian tradition, decisions could be made only by unanimous consent, not by mere majority. When unanimity could not be achieved, the problem was referred to a higher committee of wise old men.

A second meeting of the Sangha was held a century later at Vaisālī and a major rift opened almost immediately. The points of difference were at first more psychological than doctrinal; nevertheless the viewpoints were sharply at odds. The majority followed the orthodox and more narrow-minded Hīnayāna (*Theravādī*) or "Lesser Vehicle," and claimed that the attainment of Buddhahood depended on strict observance of the rules laid down by Gautama. They retained the Master's pessimistic and nihilistic outlook, faithful followers of a dry, unphilosophical doctrine that was already showing signs of decay. But India, entering upon her Civilization age, was slowly overcoming the negative, world-weary mood of Buddha's time, and a strong minority founded the Mahāyāna splinter group. More religious-minded, more emotional and less selfish, this "Larger Vehicle" began to move gradually away from pure philosophic doctrine toward a full-fledged religion, bolstered later on by a profound philosophy. Mahāyānists believed that the seeds of Buddhahood are already within man and merely need developing, by methods that might be at variance with Gautama's injunctions and prescriptions. Unable to reconcile their views with those of their colleagues of the Lesser Vehicle, they decided to secede from the Sangha and form their own council. As time passed, the psychological differences began to crystallize into doctrinal divergences of increasing magnitude, until Mahāyāna emerged as an entirely new religion. And soon, the Mahāyāna religion came to be, in its essence, an almost exact replica of the *Bhagavad Gītā*'s creed. The Dharmakāya, the Mahāyāna's ultimate ground of existence, is undistinguishable from the *Gītā*'s own Brahman. Buddha and Kṛiṣṇa are both Supreme Ones, very close to being monotheistic Almighties.

But all this is anticipation. Long before this came to pass, the Great Doctrine (Buddhism) spread far and wide under its hybrid

form, bringing with it a revolutionary leaven. This revolutionary impact was gradually taking place on four different levels: the triumph of world-weariness over life-affirming sentiments—the destruction of the intellectual esoterism of the Brāhmins through the "democratic" popularization of hitherto secret doctrines—a social revolution which prompted the Buddhist-influenced middle class, the "bourgeoisie," of the cities to revolt against the aristocratic order, followed then by mass rebellions against the bourgeois themselves—and a concealed but very real anti-Aryan movement of the hitherto submerged pre-Aryan populations of India.

Along with this, the definite refusal to intellectualize or portray any transcendental experience, to countenance adequate symbols or tolerate symbolic myths. In those days, Buddha himself was never represented in plastic arts and, faithful to his world-negating doctrine, nothing but an empty seat represented the "de-spirited one."[21]

The period following Gautama Buddha's death saw the twilight of Indian Culture. All the elements that went into preparing the ground for the coming Indian Civilization were present, including those that were going to call forth the Universal State and world-wide Caesarism. Social revolutions of great magnitude swept the Indian world from end to end. Wars became increasingly frequent, increasingly gory and increasingly devastating. Legitimacy was no longer recognized; legitimate dynasties, clergies and aristocracies were overthrown. The revolutionary leaven shook Indian society to its depths and resulted in tidal waves, no longer ripples. Agrarian revolts against the *gamabhojaka* or rural gentry are often mentioned in the Pāli *Jātaka* texts. The collapse of traditional customs and moral chaos resulted, not merely in social revolutions but in the collapse of true family feeling. Sons rebelled against fathers. We hear of Bimbisāra, ruler of Magadha, being deposed, jailed and murdered by his son Ajātasatru; of Prasenajit, ruler of Kāsī, being thrown out by his own son Virūḍhaka.

The age of the "divine right" of kings was passing, as it passed in Europe after the French Revolution. Formerly the sacred rites of the *Rājahsūya* coronation anointed the kings and identified them with the gods Indra, Prajāpati and Visṇu. These splendid ceremonies fell into disuse as kingship became increasingly unstable and as the traditional symbolism of the past no longer moved the "modern" crowds. Later on, in Caesarian days, it was replaced by the far more

"democratic" and simple *abhiṣeka* or baptism (inauguration) of the Caesarian rulers. The Buddhists themselves had contributed to the destruction of *ancien régimes* in eastern India by discarding purposely the "divine right" and claiming, like France's Jean-Jacques Rousseau or China's Taoists, that at the base of all social organization there was a primitive "social contract."[22] They even claimed that the class distinctions (*Varṇa*) had arisen as a result of cosmic decay and the destruction of primitive communism's blissful rule. The institutions of family and private property had been thereupon agreed on by contract; but the idea that it was really a theft was emphasized. The result, of course, was political and social revolutions, and eventually, in the age of Caesarism, sheer political cynicism and expediency. The future Caesarian Mauryas of a united Indian world were "beloved of the gods" (*devānampiya*), but they were no longer rulers by divine right. And the coming Caesarian dynasties were no longer of Kṣatriya descent but of humble origin; the Nandas were formerly despised Śūdras, and so were probably the Mauryas themselves.[23]

Before this came to pass, however, there was, especially in the new lands of eastern India, a great expansion of the middle classes, of the mercantile Vaisyas who were the main support of the Buddhist revolution. They acquired for a time a predominant position of power and influence, especially in Magadha and Kosala. The rise of the bourgeoisie implied that money rather than blood and ancestry became the chief social distinction. The new social ideal became that of the *asītikoṭivibhava*, the millionaire who was worth at least eight million *paṇas*. The run-of-the-mill capitalists were known as *sreṣṭhin* (Pāli *seṭṭhi*), chairmen of the joint-stock companies and financial corporations.[24] At the same time, the division of labor increased along with specialization; trade guilds (*śreṇī*) and craftsmen's unions multiplied. All such organizations were self-governing, fixed their own standards of work, wages and prices; their regulations had the force of law and were upheld by all governments; they had almost absolute power over the economic and social life of their members—and most of them were the embryos of future castes.

This simultaneous rise of middle-class utilitarianism, functional specialization and increasing political uncertainty, the moral confusion owing to a change of emphasis in man's destiny and the destruction of the former religious beliefs, everything contributed to deal a deathblow to the creative vitality of the Indian soul. India

now entered her "Hellenistic" period, an age of compilers and commentators rather than creators. This was the beginning of the age of the learned *paṇḍits'* sterile classifications for which India became famous throughout the ages, for pedantic systematization on a scale unknown until German scholarship established itself in the nineteenth century. Indian culture was cut up and frozen into scholarly treatises. Philosophies and sciences were codified in immutable form in the numerous *śāstras*. It was also an age of scientific progress, but mostly in applied science rather than fundamental knowledge. Ayurvedic medicine and surgery (the exploits of the surgeon Jīvaka are duly recorded in early Buddhist texts) made considerable progress between the sixth and third centuries B.C. and were codified in the *Charaka-Samhita* and *Susruta-Samhita.* Atreya is alleged to have founded the medical science in the sixth century B.C. at Takṣaśīla. There is plenty of evidence that the Indians had developed this science to a remarkable extent, that they practiced the dissection of bodies and many surgical operations unknown in Europe until recent times. A few centuries later, however, there is every evidence that medical progress came to an end. Philosophies extracted from the *Upaniṣads* were also systematized at this time; Bādarāyaṇa condensed the Vedānta doctrine in the *Vedānta Sūtra* about 400 B.C.

The world owes an immortal debt to Indian mathematics (codified in the *Sulva-Sūtras*), especially in the realm of algebra. The Indians, in tune with their *Weltanschauung,* had acquired early a clear conception of abstract number, as distinct from numerical emblems or the spatial extension so well defined by the geometry-minded Greeks. The Indians were able to study numbers for their own sake, evolved the concept of zero (*śūnya*, the "void"), perhaps the greatest invention in mathematics ("like coining the Nirvāṇa into dynamos," claims a modern mathematician),[25] created the concept of positive and negative quantities, solved quadratic and some types of indeterminate equations, extracted easily square and cube roots. No wonder that the Arabs, to whom algebra and the decimal system had been erroneously attributed, should have called mathematics *hindasat,* "the Indian" art.[26] The philosophic profundity of the Indians applied itself with great success to mathematics and solved a great many problems that were still riddles to the Europeans of the Renaissance.

Art forms also seem to have decayed under Buddhist influence. Music, for instance, had been based for centuries on a general theory

of sound that was developed in Vedic times; Buddhism, hostile to tradition, attempted to destroy it, as well as "all the other sacred sciences." Buddhism always tried to do away with the sacred and "humanize" what used to be holy and transcendental. But if art forms decayed, philology did not. Nothing is more striking than the profound studies made by grammarians in those days. The famous grammarian Pāṇini taught at the world-famous university of Takṣaśīla in the fourth century B.C., along with Kauṭilya, the greatest expert in political science and future minister of Candragupta Maurya. Pāṇini's grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyayī,* is one of the great intellectual masterpieces of all times, the most scientific grammar ever written until the modern science of linguistics established itself in the nineteenth century (largely inspired itself by the discovery of Sanskrit by European scholars). Greece and Rome had nothing comparable to India's science of linguistics. From Pāṇini onward, Sanskrit remained a fixed language, frozen into permanent stock forms, and then became known as *Saṃskṛta* or "perfected."

Finally, it was also an age of legal codes, the age when the old customs and traditions assume their permanent form and are set down in codified form, when the fluid social tradition is finally spelled out and committed to the written word. The main legal codes, the *Dharma Sūtras,* were composed between the sixth and second centuries B.C.; most of them were the work of such famous legislators as Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha and Āpastamba; and later on, much as Justinian rewrote the massive legal codes inherited from Rome, Manu rewrote the Indian codes and left his imperishable name stamped on the most monumental legal work of its time. And with this crowning achievement, Indian Culture's historical growth and development came to a close.

Caesarism and the Dawn of Civilization

IN THE fourth century B.C., India stood on the threshold of Civilization. True cultural development had come to an end; the creative genius of Aryanized Hindustan was exhausted after a thousand years of colossal output. The cycle had run full circle and the very preaching of Gautama Buddha had sounded the death knell of Culture. His anti-metaphysical teaching had emphasized individual (not social) morality, a clinical outlook and indifference to culture and philosophic speculations. His success was largely due to the fact that he interpreted the weary feelings of his contemporaries with incisive sharpness. But although he professed a remarkable lack of interest in mundane affairs, his teaching had just as many revolutionary implications in political and social matters as it had in things religious. He had "democratized" religion, had dealt a terrible blow to the Brāhmins and had given the rising urban middle classes a "modern" faith that could be used as a weapon against the old social order of the more "catholic" Brāhmanism. By striking a mighty blow, however indirect, at social inequality and at the traditional ruling classes, he prepared the way for the coming of the Caesars who were going to rule on an Indian–world-wide scale. And it was no accident that it was in the new areas of eastern India that his preaching reaped its most powerful harvest, in an area where the power and prestige of Brāhmins and Kṣatriyas had always been weakest, and where, on the other hand, the Vaisya merchant and trading middle classes were most powerful, and where eventually members of the Sūdra proletariat were able, through revolutions, to reach supreme dictatorial power on many occasions.

Increasing interstate wars and social revolutions on an Indian–world-wide scale prefaced, although few were conscious of it, a Universal Empire and Caesarism. The cultural unity of India had, for

long, been taken for granted. Just as the cultural unity of Hellas was taken for granted by the Greeks in their multistate period, and just as the multitude of contemporary Chinese states felt themselves part of one cultural whole, "Chu Hsia," or "All the Hsia," the cultural unity of India, or *Bhāratavarṣa*, was a recognized fact; and soon enough, thirst for political unity and social peace, along with economic prosperity, promotes the idea of a universal state under the leadership of one powerful ruler. This ideal had already taken shape long before it was actualized by the Mauryas; it was the ideal of the *cakravartin*, the "world emperor" whose concept the Buddhists had appropriated quite naturally; it was the secular counterpart of the Buddhist universality, the Caesarian concept that would overpower the Brāhmins, establish democratic equality and justice: "The Buddha and the Cakravartin . . . manifest the same principle, one on the spiritual, the other on the secular planes."[1] Both concepts had, after a few generations, become inextricably intertwined and more than one monument of the time depicts Gautama as bestowing his earthly, political mantle on the *cakravartin*, the "superman turning the wheel,"[2] the Universal Caesar. In his replies to his favorite pupil Ānanda, Gautama is even alleged to have claimed that there are four kinds of men worthy of a *stupa*, three of them being either *Tathāgatas* like himself or pupils of *Tathāgatas*, or *Pratyeka Buddhas* (pure mystics who, having reached Enlightenment, do not return to preach); the fourth is a secular *cakravartin*, that is, a type of ruler who, in Gautama's days, had never yet existed.[3]

The idea of the Universal Emperor is a very old idea, and often represents an unconscious legacy of some "ghost empire" representing the great Civilization that was overthrown by the present society. In India, there is hardly any doubt that the *cakravartin* ideal goes back to pre-Aryan times, to the deceased Harappā Civilization, as an element in the collective unconscious of the submerged masses of the Indians who were the descendants of Harappā men. But this ideal soon became welded to a new, revolutionary political doctrine that was going to make its realization possible. As in China, exhausted by wars and social upheavals, there was finally born the ruthlessly realistic and cynical doctrine of the Legalists that eventually produced China's world-wide Caesarism under Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, so was there the exact counterpart in India. In the days of Buddha and in the centuries following him, politics had become completely ruthless, amoral and cynical. And there developed a bril-

liant school of realistic political scientists who were eventually to weld the *cakravartin* ideal to the most Machiavellian political theory ever devised—including that of Machiavelli himself.

The name of the Brāhmin intellectual Chānakya Kauṭilya will forever be attached to the most profound study of politics yet written, the *Arthasāstra,* a penetrating summing up of all the political theories evolved in the frightful times of Indian–world wars when men were, as they are today, baffled by their own jungle-like behavior. The *Arthasāstra* is totally, irrevocably amoral and delineates with the cold precision of a brilliant treatise on surgery all the realities of political life, anywhere and at any time. With mathematical accuracy, it analyzes all human weaknesses and delusions, not to condemn them, but to use them in the essentially practical technique of securing political power. In an age when all religious creeds are put in question, all philosophies criticized violently, all spiritual truths doubted, all traditions rejected, nothing is left save crude realism and brute power. And whereas in China the cynical Legalists had at least to contend with a sturdy tradition of ethics in politics and with the enduring sanctity of the "Son of Heaven" type of rulership, the Indian cynics had the field to themselves because the very temper of Indian philosophy detached it from a world now viewed as largely illusory. Since, for Brāhmanism and Buddhism alike, the only thing that mattered was individual emancipation from the fetters of earthly life, the earth itself was left to these cynics. In their thirst for power and prestige, the Brāhmin intellectuals had done untold harm to traditional kingship, only to be overthrown in their turn by the rising tide of Buddhists and other anti-Brāhmin forces. In an age of social and mental confusion, there was nothing left standing in the way of the utter political realists.

We find in the *Arthasāstra* all the cynical recipes with which modern totalitarian dictatorships have made us familiar, and much more. The elaborate spying, the secret police, the lying and deceit in foreign policy, the art of treachery are all analyzed and commended. The art of deceit was already expounded in the *Mahābhārata:* "Carry your enemy on your shoulder until you have got from him what you want, then throw him off—throw him off and shatter him, like an earthen jar against a rock."[4] All intended victims should be approached in the friendliest way and lulled to sleep with the help of *māyā,* the "creation of an illusion."

There is a thorough analysis of political mathematics, a study of

the balance of forces, of geopolitical science revolving around the concept of the *maṇḍala,* the political circle of neighboring states. The study of the correct approach to coalitions, alliances and leagues sbould start with the concept of the central realm (*vijigīshu*) whose ruler is the object of the study, as standing in the very center of a target, surrounded hy concentric rings or *maṇḍalas,* the neighboring ring being usually composed of encmies (*ari*), who in their turn have at their backs another ring made up of states friendly (*mitra*) to the ruler of the central realm, hut who in turn have a further ring around them whose states arc the friends of the central realm's enemies (*ari-mitra*) and therefore their enemies, further surrounded in turn by another *maṇḍala* of friend's friends (*mitra-mitra*) who are further stabhed in the back by the friends of the enemy's friends (*ari-mitra-mitra*), and so on ad infinitum.[5] Of course, every single state has its own set of *maṇḍalas* cutting across those of all the other states. Theoretical analysis of this political geometry included a psychological study of the states' rulers, the inner weaknesses and strengths of thcir organizations, and so on. There is no need to enter further into the amazing complcxity of this analysis; there is hardly any doubt that its validity is universal and that a comparative study of European politics and of the principles laid down in the *Artha-sâstra* would vindicate the applicability of the latter's theories to our present-day political problems.

Kauṭilya never tires of warning rulers that they live in a wickcd and merciless world, and that to ignore it is shcer foolishness: in this junglc-like world, the only law is that of the jungle—or of the amoral ocean depths where tbe only rule of conduct is *matsya-nyāya,* "the law of the fish" according to which the big ones eat the small ones.[6] Only deceit or brutal strength enables a ruler to survive and increase his power: facing an enemy, one should use either *sāman* (conciliation) if one is too weak, *daṇḍa* (violent assault) if one is strong enough, *dāna* (bribery) if one is uncertain of the balance of strength or *bheda* (deceit) if one desires to apply the policy of undermining the enemy through infiltration and internal disruption. Every device, every form of treacbery, every ruthless form of annihilation of an enemy, everything is allowed if successful. In the world of politics, there are no ethics, no morality, no divine guidancc or spiritual sanction. What else should one expect in the light of the prevailing philosophies created by Indian Culture—Sāṁkhya, Vedānta or Buddhism?

We should then not be surprised to read in the *Mahābhārata* the following choice samples of political philosophy: "The last word of social wisdom is, never trust." And, "Might is above right; right proceeds from might; right has its support in might, as living beings in the soil." And, "Right is in the hands of the strong; nothing is impossible to the strong. Everything is pure that comes from the strong." And also, "If thou art not prepared to be cruel and to kill men as the fisher kills the fish, abandon every hope of great success."[7]

In this suffocating atmosphere of constant danger, treachery and amorality, rulership does become as difficult as the *Arthasāstra* depicts it. Rulers should trust no one, not even their parents or children, should guard constantly against poison, should never sleep twice consecutively in the same room. And Kauṭilya warns that only utter conformity to all the intricate rules laid down in his *Arthasāstra* will enable a ruler to become master of the whole civilized world—something that had never happened before his time, but did happen in his own lifetime and under his own supervision. This ideal of the *mahāpuruṣa cakravartin,* the "superman turning the wheel" (the "wheel of universality") could only come into being by following the rules laid down in the *Arthasāstra,* the most cynically ruthless political theory ever propounded in any civilization.

Although India had suffered no outright invasion since the coming of the Aryans, more than a thousand years before, Indians had acquired new and redoubtable neighbors—their Aryan cousins, the Persians. These cousins were a segment of that second branch of Aryans who had invaded Asia Minor and the Mesopotamian plains (Irāk) almost at the very same time that the Indo-Aryans were streaming down into Hindustan (the third branch having invaded Greece and Europe). The other segments of that second branch of invading Aryans (Kassites, Mitannians and Hittites) had all fallen under the spell of the great Babylonian Civilization. But not so the Persians, who remained for centuries on the bleak Iranian highlands, overlooking the rich plains of Mesopotamia in the west, and those of the Indus Valley in the east, with a mixture of contempt and envy. Kassites, Mitannians and Hittites bore the same relationship to the Persians as Central Europe's Slavs, two thousand years later, to the Russians. And with the destruction of Babylon and their first clashes with the Greeks, the Persians assumed the stature of a still-barbaric great power, which the Russians have been assuming for

the past three centuries. To both the Greeks and the Indians, the Persians were the "Russians" of their days.

This perspective puts us in a better position to focus our attention on their historical role. The Persian hordes of Cyrus collided for the first time with an Indian army in the sixth century B.C. In those days, when, far away in eastern India, Bimbisāra was laying the foundations of the future greatness of the Magadhan Empire, the western areas around modern Peshāwār and Rāwalpiṇḍi belonged to the cultured and sophisticated kingdom of Gandhāra. This frontier kingdom soon lost its independence, along with the entire west bank of the Indus River, to the Persians. Under Darius, the Persian dominions extended as far as Rājasthān, and this new Persian satrapy eventually came to constitute the most populous and wealthiest of the Persian Empire's twenty provinces. But it was more in the nature of a group of protectorates more or less loosely controlled by distant overlords.

The constant threat of invasion from the northwest that has plagued India ever since was, in those days, certainly instrumental in shifting the center of gravity of India toward the Ganges and the east in general—and later on, the south. But it also explains the ease with which Alexander the Great conquered a substantial slice of western India as a mere successor of the Persian rulers of old. This feat would never have been possible if he had not been assisted in this undertaking by Indian monarchs such as Āmbhi, king of Takṣaśīla, or if he had not made a friend of a defeated foe like the powerful Paurava ruler to whom he restored his kingdom. Anyway, his exhausted army never reached the plains of the Ganges, by now the real heart of India, and after a terrible retreat through the scorching desert of Baluchistan, he withdrew to the Middle East and died in Babylon. A few years later, all traces of his political domination had disappeared from Indian soil. The entire episode, so striking to European imagination, was almost ignored in India—so much so, that no mention of Alexander's raid can be found in the whole of Indian literature.[8]

However, this episode had its importance, not only in unveiling India to the Classical world through the destruction of the obstructive Persian Empire, but in precipitating events of great magnitude within India itself.

In 326 B.C. Magadha was, without question, the most powerful

state in India, a true superstate (*udāsīṇa*). The Emperor of Magadha, last of the Nanda dynasty founded a century and a half earlier by the great "Napoleonic" Mahāpadma, was hated and feared —hated because of his heavy taxation and brutality toward his people, hated by the upper-class Brāhmins and Kṣatriyas because of his own hatred for them, which sprang from the lowly Śūdra origin of his dynasty; feared because of his vast financial resources and his colossal army of 200,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, his thousands of war chariots and countless war elephants. No army this size had yet been seen in India.

Meanwhile, the ease with which, in eastern India, the strange Yavanas (Greco-Macedonians) had subdued a number of small Indian states, had profoundly struck the Indians and had proved to them, if nothing else had before, that their disunion was a main source of weakness. India was already thirsting for peace and a Universal State. The arrival of the foreigners was merely the catalyst that precipitated the inevitable events. And the chief engineer of this bold undertaking was the very same Chānakya Kauṭilya, the teacher of political science at the University of Takṣaśīla.

Kauṭilya had previously repaired to Pāṭaliputra, capital city of the Magadhan Empire, where he had quarreled with the ruling monarch. Having become a refugee from Magadha, Kauṭilya met a young man of great energy and ability, Candragupta Maurya, while they were both hiding in the Vindhya forests. Joining forces, fusing penetrating thought and forceful action, they raised an army of outlaws, fanned the anti-foreign feelings of the Indians in western India, went to war against the small Macedonian garrisons left behind by Alexander, and soon found themselves masters of the lower Indus Valley. In no time, the Maurya "upstart" conquered the whole of western India and, turning east, defeated the Magadhan army led by the inept general Bhadrasāla. He thus became emperor, not only of Magadha, but, for the first time in history, of an almost united India. As first Universal Emperor, he concluded a treaty with Alexander's successor, Seleukos, according to which he received the entire territory of modern Afghanistan (known as White India) and Baluchistan.

This Indian Caesar was soon converted to Mahāvīra's revolutionary creed, although he remained an extremely unorthodox Jain. As crafty and ruthless as Kauṭilya could have wished, he was no partisan of non-violence and practiced to the full the cynical laws of the fish,

matsya-nyāya. His conversion was due far more to his anti-Brāhmin feelings and probably "democratic" attitude than to any religious conviction. Sometime around 300 B.C. he was succeeded by his son Bindusara, who increased further this empire which extended already from Turkestan down to modern Mysore and comprised most of northern India and the Deccan. Only one other powerful state remained independent in India: Kalinga. It was the task of his son and heir, Asoka, to deal with this last remaining obstacle to the Universal Empire when he succeeded his father sometime around 273 B.C.

With the accession of Bindusara's son to the throne of Pāṭaliputra, India's Universal Empire reached the peak of its expansion and glory. Emperor Asoka's remarkable career is known to us mainly through numerous inscriptions carved on rock and stone—a sharp streak of light in the midst of the usual fog in which India's history is shrouded. He began at first to exercise his youthful genius by extending the limits of the empire further south, down into *Tamilakam*, or "Tamil Land," and proved that he was one of the great soldiers of all times, a true master of tactics and strategy. But his historical fame comes mainly from his wholehearted rejection of warfare after an outstanding victory over the ruler of Kalinga. As horrified by the cruelty and appalling devastation of war as the mythical Arjuna of the *Bhagavad Gītā,* but disregarding the more realistic advice of Lord Kṛiṣṇa, this highly sensitive emperor declared that he would no longer seek conquest by force of arms but by spiritual means only —a temporal abdication which, however idealistic, prefaced the collapse of his empire after his death. If he chose not to follow the advice of the *Arthasāstra,* others followed it and would eventually get the better of his empire. The cynical but realistic Legalists were eventually eliminated in China by the first Han Emperors, who yet consolidated their work of unification with all their might. The Hans were even able to restore to its rightful place the very morality that the Legalists had contemptuously discarded. Things were different in India, however; and the sincere conversion of Asoka to an unworldly creed spelled the doom of his work after his death.

The year of his great victory over Kalinga, Asoka became a Buddhist, an act that was a striking historic symbol. The end of a great Culture is usually marked by a humanitarian movement of great and sometimes (especially in India) dangerous proportions. For gen-

erations, saints and influential sages had preached the doctrine of
ahiṁsā, non-violence. Humanitarianism, already so striking in our
Western world since the end of the Victorian Age, has a great dis-
tance to cover before it reaches the extremes witnessed in Indian
Civilization—a whole society converted gradually to a paralyzing
pacifism which made it an easy prey for the ruthless cynics, a paci-
fism which, however noble and idealistic, had also some recognizable
roots in a debilitating tropical climate. Chinese humanitarianism and
pacifism, dwelling in a cooler and more stimulating climate, never
reached the extreme of *ahiṁsā.* But in India, as in China, there is
evidence that there was no more general conscription after the estab-
lishment of Caesarism and the Universal Empire.[9] From then on,
struggles were carried out by professional soldiers or praetorian
guards.

Asoka became a full member of the Buddhist *Sangha* a few years
later. Exceedingly tolerant in matters of religion, he alloyed absolute
faithfulness to the Eightfold Path with such prosaic duties as the
digging of wells and irrigation canals, the construction of roads, hos-
pitals and public gardens all over the empire. Widows, orphans and
the disabled were looked after and supported financially by the ad-
ministration. State warehouses dotted the countryside, filled with
stores for the relief of unexpected famines. He created a special de-
partment for the benevolent administration of aboriginal tribes, en-
dowed a great many colleges and universities, improved the taxation
system of his predecessor, included the income of his own private
estates in the state budget and spread his fiscal justice all over India.

But there were also an extremely powerful secret police and a
network of government spies (*satrinah*) under the supervision of
"Institutes of Espionage," an all-powerful bureacracy capable of su-
pervising all prices of goods, inspecting everything, punishing dras-
tically any adulteration or cornering of foodstuffs, taxing trade,
banking and commerce, and administering the far-flung industries
owned by the state.[10]

Although the Brāhmins had lost their dominant position long ago,
and bitterly resented the supremacy of their more democratic Bud-
dhist rivals, they were still able to retain a great deal of influence
over the uneducated masses. But Asoka did his utmost to encourage
the spread of "democratic" Buddhism in the hope that it would
ultimately do away with the influence and aristocratic prestige of
the Brāhmins. There is no doubt that Buddhism, as Asoka conceived

it at the time, had a power of expansion that Brāhmanism did not possess. It was not tied to any specific social organization, was democratic and applicable to all men in all countries and was relatively simple from a doctrinal standpoint. Asoka organized this Buddhist expansion on a grand, truly imperial scale. Missionaries were sent all over the known world, to Persia, Egypt and Greece—but also to new, relatively uncivilized lands such as South India (the Tamil kingdoms of the Cholas and Pāndyas as well as Keralaputra and Satiyaputra), to Suvarnabhūmi (Lower Burma) and to Lankā (Ceylon). In fact, Ceylon was mostly converted to Buddhism by Asoka's missionaries and has remained Buddhist to this day. But such conversions were not merely religious: these young barbarians, living beyond the seas to the south and southeast of India, were simultaneously converted to the Civilization of India; it was a *civilizing* process rather than a *religious* conversion. Mahinda, Asoka's younger brother, settled down as his imperial brother's chief representative and brought to the uncouth Ceylonese not merely the Buddhist creed, but the techniques of stone carving and irrigation. It was a form of Caesarian imperialism, but one of a noble kind that has few counterparts in any other civilization.

As we know from the Rock Edicts, Asoka's Buddhism was already very different from Gautama's doctrine, whose basic nihilism had soon been transmuted into a firm belief in a future life and in the survival of the soul after death. On Asoka's Rock Edicts, the negative *nirvāṇa* is replaced by the positive *svarga,* a "heavenly salvation as a reward for good behavior in the present world."[11] This heaven or paradise beyond death is viewed in almost concrete terms as a positive state of bliss. Gautama Buddha, the agnostic teacher who said that "One must not accept my law from reverence but first try it as gold is tried by fire,"[12] was now in the process of becoming a god incarnate. And Asoka did not hesitate to say: "All that Lord Buddha said is well said."

To Gautama's strictly unmetaphysical and purely psychological system, his disciples had begun to add, in the course of time, a metaphysical interpretation borrowed from other sources. From being a mere therapy for agnostics, his Great Doctrine was gradually evolving into a powerful *religion* with all the customary trappings. The exhausted scepticism of the Culture's twilight was now replaced by a regressive movement, a slow return to past common sense, to the sober and constructive optimism that underlies the establishment of a

great Civilization. Metaphysical disputations and religious contro-
versies were shunned, as far as possible, and a reasonable search for
harmony was tirelessly preached by the great emperor. Religious tol-
erance, implying also political and social tolerance, was compulsory,
and all quarrels between rival sects were frowned upon by an admin-
istration that was more interested in efficiency and economic pros-
perity than in philosophic disputations. A true Civilization-man,
Asoka emphasized almost exclusively ethics and morality, the "es-
sence of all religions" according to him.[13] He believed in complete
religious freedom and showered gifts on Brāhmins who, in spite of
their social prestige, were still victims of a sort of ostracism, legacy
of the past social revolutions. But Asoka behaved the same way to-
ward Jains or toward the Ājīvikas, followers of Gosāla.

The "democratic" flavor of Asoka's Caesarian rule can be gauged
from some of his Rock Edicts, notably Rock Edict VI: "I am ready
to do the people's business in all places. . . . I have commanded
that immediate report must be made to me at any hour and in any
place, because I never feel full satisfaction in my efforts and dispatch
of business. For the welfare of all folks is what I must work for."[14]
The age of "divine right" kings had long since come to an end in
India and no ruler, then or since, had been able to stay on his throne
for long without courting the favor of public opinion—that is, by
being personally accessible and by ruling personally in true Caesarian
fashion. This new type of Indian rulership implied that now "kingship
lacked the idea of sanctity, the idea of a divine mandate bestowed
by the gods on the bearer of the crown; rather, the state was a dem-
onstration and reflex of the personal power of the king himself—a
prodigious unification of disparate regions by a steel-hard central
tyranny, in perpetual danger of disintegration. What it required—
and *all* that it required to survive—was a kind of superman in the
seat of control, a superdemon, who, by superior talent, intellect,
could keep the whole impossibly intricate machine running at the
peak of power."[15] This is a perfect definition of Caesarism as op-
posed to the "legitimate" monarchy issued from a feudal system—a
Civilization-rule as opposed to a Culture-rule.

But it was also peculiarly Indian, in the sense that no known
Civilization has ever indulged in such cynically ruthless politics, and
therefore no Civilization has ever been so politically unstable. Be-
cause the Indian ruler had none of the sanctity that surrounded even
the Caesarian Son of Heaven in China or the Egyptian Pharaohs of

the Civilization period, there was hope for him only in his cunning and in precarious fate, *daivam*. Politics was a product of the jungle, outside ethics and morality: Ethics (*dharma*) now prevailed *socially* but not *politically*. The Indian ruler neither wanted pity nor granted it; what else to expect when the general tone of Indian political life could be summed up thus: "As clouds change from moment to moment, just so thine enemy of today, becomes, even today, thy friend."[16] And finally: "No one has ever seen in this world what the fruits are of a good or evil deed. Let us then aspire to be strong; because all things belong to the man who is strong."[17] All this explains that there could be no enduring Universal Empire in India, that the only thing that could endure was a Universal Society, because the only durable elements of a Civilization are those which are strongly permeated by a high sense of ethical propriety. Having adopted the complete lack of ethics prevailing in the jungle for their political life, the Indians experienced the most junglelike confusion in their political history. The events following Asoka's death were to make this plain.

In Asoka's time, the old Indian art reached the climax of its perfection. Because they worked in perishable material (mostly wood), the earlier works of the Culture era have long since been destroyed; most of the evolution of Indian art remains hidden to us. But we can assume a long tradition of steady growth and ever renewed creativity leading to the splendid maturity of Maurya art—temporarily interrupted, perhaps, by the prevailing puritanism of Buddha's times. A modern student has exclaimed that "The perfection of the execution of the best examples of Asokan sculpture is astonishing."[18] And a great archaeologist, Sir John Marshall, commented on "The extraordinary precision and accuracy which characterizes all Maurya work, and which has never, we venture to say, been surpassed even by the finest workmanship on Athenian buildings."[19] But another scholar adds pertinently: "Such an art, in spite of its iconology, has no real flavor of the religious; it is an art of pomp, secular display and success."[20] And after the Mauryas, artistic decline became quite evident for a while.[21]

What is most striking about Maurya art is its *technical* perfection, the ever-present hallmark of Civilization. It was largely reproductive, a replica of art forms invented centuries before when Indian Culture was in full development. All we have to do is to listen to what the

modern experts have to say: "The monolithic columns of fine-grained sandstone, some of which exceeded forty feet in height, exclusive of the separate capital, are marvels of technical execution. . . . The stone-work in Asoka's time is equally well finished in all other respects. Most of the inscriptions are incised with extreme accuracy in beautifully cut letters."[22]

Artistic inspiration had obviously been overcome by engineering skill in Maurya India. Technological progress, from the seventh century B.C. onward, must have been remarkable and suggests the possibility of a real industrial revolution. Complex irrigation works had multiplied, as they had in contemporary China—a vast network of canals with sluices spread all over northern India, varied water rates being levied on the customers. Roads and large highways, in no way inferior to those of the Roman Empire, connected all important cities. One great highway (remote ancestor of Lord Dalhousie's Great Trunk Road) ran from Takṣaśīla in the northwest to distant Pāṭaliputra. Pillars marking distances, caravansaries and rest houses, storehouses lined all the main highways. Life was full of bustle and activity, trade flourished, education was widespread and it is highly probable that there was "a higher general percentage of literacy among the population than that existing at present."[23] The immense bureaucracy worked with precision and efficiency, taxing, regulating, inspecting—but all under the personal supervision of the emperor.

It was a great and flourishing Civilization, a prosperous world empire. And yet, Asoka's death was the signal for its disintegration, one from which it never really recovered. Why?

The idea of a Universal State in India, after a brief century of actualization in the concrete world of historical fact, reverted to being just an idea, a dream. Asoka's two grandsons, Dasaratha and Samprati, divided the empire between them, possibly along administrative lines similar to the late partition of the Roman Empire into Western and Eastern Empires. Outlying provinces fell out gradually and Asoka's successors felt increasingly insecure on the imperial throne. The concept of *legitimate* monarchy had become outdated in India, and the Caesarian power was from then on at the disposal of those who were strong and ruthless enough to secure it by violent means. Thus, about 185 B.C., the last descendant of the great Asoka was murdered by his praetorian commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra Sunga, who then proceeded to assume the imperial mantle himself.

But the empire kept on shrinking, and the Sunga dynasty was eventually overthrown in its turn. From then on, the turmoil in Indian politics was unceasing, and one soon loses all connecting threads in this bewildering succession of dynasties and states that appear and disappear on the ever changing map of the Indian subcontinent.

It was evident that a society without historical memory could not build an enduring political structure. Asoka obviously lived far more in an eternal present than in a future which he could have shaped if he had cared to. But he was, heart and soul, an Indian, a man of his place and time. He had certainly proved to be an exception, a strong and just ruler, concerned with political ethics. But after him, India reverted, politically, to the jungle. The art of government became known as *daṇḍanīti*, the "science of punishment."[24] The actual practice of Indian government was severely ruthless, whereas the Chinese was, on the whole, benevolent. However, Caesarian rule in India and China had one feature in common: the right of rebellion, which was explicitly recognized, indeed had been commended as early as the *Mahābhārata*, where the claim is put forth that a ruler who is oppressive or who fails to rule firmly should be killed like a mad dog.[25] The Buddhist *Jātakas* mention many instances of rulers overthrown by mass revolts; no ruler could afford to flout public opinion, and more than one was left to the not-so-tender mercies of the volatile town mobs.[26]

What should be kept in mind, however, is that Indian politics were part and parcel of the Indian world-outlook, inevitably so. If one considers the philosophic assumptions underlying Indian public life, one will see that its political cynicism was not really absolute. Indian political science subscribed wholeheartedly to the idea that might makes right. But whereas in the West, imbued with a dualistic outlook, we have set up the ideal of good against evil, God against Satan, in terms of absolute, eternal antagonism, forever irreconcilable, the Indians see them as *terms of a dialectic process*. Unable to transcend mere logic, Western religious and philosophic thought remains confined within the narrow bounds of a static dualism. The Indians had correctly seen that good and evil are always two relative terms of an unending dialectic process in which they constantly shift position. Thus, if might exists, it is simply because previous causes had made it right; if it appears to crush right, it is because this right is illusory, because unperceived altered conditions had made it wrong; and a new right will emerge from the temporary victory of naked

might. Furthermore, it is always understood that the greatest might of all is spiritual, that it consists in utter detachment from the things of this world, the final, utter, supreme right—that which is, in fact, beyond good and evil, beyond all opposition of dualism, the keystone of Indian monism. Man is not separate from nature, but merely develops out of it. To be true to himself, man must conform to the laws of nature, that is, to the laws of the jungle. Indian political life remained essentially Darwinian, but the idealization of plain biological truths actually represented a step backward in human evolution, even though the Brāhmins justified it with great intellectual sophistication.

No Civilization, no society could have lasted so long as the Indian, however, if this Darwinian outlook on political behavior had not been compensated for in some other way. If politics failed India, it was only natural that a new type of social structure would be evolved that would take over most of the duties left to political administration in other societies. And that is exactly what happened when the caste system was set up—or rather set itself up.

The collapse of India's Universal State was closely linked with the decline of Buddhism and the outbreak of a violent Brāhmanical reaction that had probably started long before Pushyamitra Sunga seized power. Old-fashioned Brāhmanism, in fact, was also undergoing far-reaching changes under the impact of Buddhism and other related doctrines. Gautama had been successful in "democratizing" the esoteric teaching of the Brāhmins, in publicizing the skeptical agnosticism of India's Modern Age. The cat had been let out of the bag, but now the more experienced and more mature Brāhmins of the Civilization era proceeded to put it back in as gently as they could. Why were they able to do so? Largely because Buddhism, for all its idealistic philosophy of freedom of knowledge, popular education, belief in the equality of man and democratic outlook, never really made a dent in the basic polytheism, the religious emotionalism and the acceptance of social inequality prevailing among the vast majority of the population. It ignored, and was able to ignore for a time —during the period of transition from Culture to Civilization—certain basic realities of Indian psychology and social concepts. Buddhism had closed the great development of Indian Culture, but could never do as a permanent religion of the Indian masses. Buddhism sought to impose uniformity on a people who take more delight in

variety and multifarious forms than any other in the world; it offered empiricism to the most speculative people on earth, and frowned on philosophizing, whereas the Indians were again delighting in it. Inevitably, just as a strongly adulterated Confucianism crept back into the China of the Hans at about the same time, Brāhmanism was eventually restored to its old position.

But then it was no longer the pre-Buddhistic Brāhmanism, no more than Han Confucianism was the doctrine of Confucius. It was a new, synthetic version which had absorbed many features of Buddhism and Jainism, and which eventually all but swallowed up these heretical creeds, digested them and made them an integral part of the religion with which India was destined to live until the present day: it became Hinduism, as we know it today, a fantastically complex structure, the most "catholic" of all religions, encompassing the crudest forms of animism, sun worship, polytheism, as well as the most profound form of monism. And the most important feature of this Hinduism in political and social matters began to crystallize some time after Asoka's death: the caste system.

What gave rise to the caste system was a problem that still plagues some Western nations today: the racial problem. So long as a society lives in a feudal or aristocratic age, where social inequality is accepted as a matter of course, racial distinctions are included in the natural *social* stratification of the times and specifically *racial* problems do not appear as such. Social classes are more or less fluid. With the collapse of the aristocratic social order and the end of the *ancien régimes,* the various processes accelerate. Society becomes more fluid, individuals move up and down the social ladder far more quickly, and social classes become thoroughly mixed. Intermarriage was widespread in India until the post-Maurya era. It was accepted because it affected only a minority of the population, because the light-skinned upper classes could pick and choose what they thought were the best elements among the dark-skinned lower classes (Sūdras)— not through a planned, conscious design but by biological instinct. In the days of the Mauryas, there was no sharp racial division, such as there was in early Aryan times, between whites and colored. The populations were far more mixed, and there were many shades running from pure white to pitch dark. Nevertheless, the racial instinct was vivid, and a perusal of Indian literature illustrates this enduring sentiment. Patanjali tells us at one point that "the physical characteristics of a Brāhmin were fair skin, and tawny hair." He added that

a black color of the skin was the distinctive trait of non-Brāhmins.[27] And the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* gives all the recipes needed to produce offspring with the desired color of skin.[28]

Trouble really started, however, when *democracy* came to India, between the ages of the Buddha and Asoka. Social equality, as preached by Buddhism and other contemporary doctrines, as enforced, sometimes ruthlessly, during the revolutions that put many low-class Sūdras on Caesarian thrones, the downfall of hereditary aristocracies and the resulting social confusion, all this brought forth a problem which had never existed in the past: how to reconcile great racial differences and democratic equality. The solution was found in the gradual establishment of the caste system. Instead of an aristocratic hierarchy of more or less fluid social classes (*varṇa,* that is, "color"), the resurgent Hinduism created a new pattern of parallel, rigidly fixed and inwardly democratic castes (*jāti*). The Portuguese who took their expression *casta* from the Latin *castus* (pure) knew what they were doing when they refused to confuse social classes and castes.[29] In the great legal code of Manu, the distinction between the four *varṇas* and the more than fifty *jātis* existing at the time, is strongly emphasized. What became known as the Institutes of Manu (the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*) were in fact composed by various members of the Mānava Brāhmins between the fifth and second centuries B.C. at the very time when Indian society was beginning to crystallize the fluid institutions inherited from the past. Later on, the Brāhmins decided quite arbitrarily to recognize the four social classes as the original castes, and it is this spurious tradition that is the source of all the subsequent confusion.[30]

A comparison with some of our present-day concepts will clarify the difference between caste and class: the establishment of caste in the India of those days was the equivalent of the "separate but equal" doctrine that has prevailed in the South of the United States when a similar conflict between democratic equality and great racial differences resulted in the same dilemma. And whereas the term *varṇa* was frequently used in the Vedic treatises to characterize the social classes, the proper term for caste, *jāti,* was never mentioned. But although the caste system itself theoretically implies no real inequality, a certain social stratification tended most of the time to coincide with the caste pattern. Mahatma Gandhi saw this quite clearly twenty-two hundred years later and pointed out: "The caste system is not based on inequality, there is no question of inferiority, and so

far as there is any such question arising, as in Madras, Maharashtra, or elsewhere, the tendency should undoubtedly be checked."[31] On the whole, the caste structure was *intended* to be democratic, and usually its leading strata, the Brāhmins, enjoyed neither financial nor political power. In fact, the caste system was devised precisely to *split up power* by creating conflicting hierarchies.

Ostensibly a division of the population along occupational lines, the caste system was in fact a device for the preservation, not of a racial purity that no longer existed, but of a racial stratification as it existed then. The caste system preserved this racial differentiation so well that anthropological studies carried out in the twentieth century, based on the statistical evidence provided by cephalic and nasal indices, reveal that in Hindustan (northern India, at the exclusion of the Deccan and South India, being the "civilized" area in those days) physical and *racial* stratification corresponds closely with modern *caste* stratification.[32] Not only that, but when one moves from the original area where Aryans settled in greatest numbers (the Punjab) toward the east, one discovers that, for instance, the Brāhmin of Uttar Pradesh is ethnically closer to a Chuhra, a low caste from the Punjab, than to any other high caste of Uttar Pradesh—Aryan blood becoming more and more diluted as one moves east and south.[33] It is no surprise, then, to discover that caste distinctions are least rigid in the Punjab, where racial differences are slightest, and increase steadily as one travels further east and south. They are greatest in South India, where there is almost no Aryan blood at all.

Rigid in its internal structure, the caste system was sufficiently fluid, nevertheless, to accept the formation of new castes or subcastes whenever conditions were ripe. Thus, from Manu's fifty-odd castes, the number has grown over the centuries to the thousands in existence today. And as Jawaharlal Nehru has pointed out, "within each group there was equality and democracy."[34]

What happened, of course, is that caste became the great social expression of Indian Civilization, a spontaneous organization of self-governing groups that took over most of the actual political functions assumed in other civilizations by centralized bureaucracies. Each group became a sort of small republic without any specific territory but tied to race, language, customs, occupation or religious ritual, in full co-operation with other castes. Starting originally from racial distinctions, the caste system soon became all-embracing, and castes began to form themselves along occupational lines as well,

functioning as labor unions, trade guilds and other corporate bodies. Many of them must have started as, say, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the United States, in which membership is completely colored, and which is both a functional and a racial group; all that is missing to make this modern labor union a caste is hereditary membership. Another instance, but no longer racial in the proper sense, would be the legal restriction of recruitment into the New York City police force to men of Roman Catholic Irish descent; this restriction however would only be possible if, as in India, the various racial, religious and functional communities remained insulated from each other and did not intermarry.

The result is that in India one can distinguish an infinite variety of castes. There are the *functional* castes: trading castes such as the Baniā, which include the Khatri of the Punjab, the Agarwāl of Rājasthān, etc.; artisan castes (cobblers, carpenters, weavers, etc.); agricultural castes (growers of vegetables, flowers, tobacco); artistic castes (musicians, singers, dancers, acrobats, writers); and so on. All functional castes are broken up geographically so that there is no necessary affinity between similar functional groups in Madras and the Punjab, for instance, no resemblance in their caste customs and traditions, often no common name. For instance, the members of the main trading caste of Rājasthān are of Aryan stock and occupy a high social position; but they have no connection with the trading Komatis of southern India, who are of Dravidian descent and have entirely different customs; nor with the trading Balija of Telengana, who are socially inferior; nor with the Subarnabanik merchants of Bengal. And the same goes for all other functional castes. It should be added that the *social* hierarchy superimposed on (theoretically) parallel castes is not really part of the caste system itself; and that in the south of India, colonized at a much later date, the caste system assumed a far more "social" and aristocratic character than it did in the more northern areas where it was originally born.

Next, we have multitudes of *race* castes, originally tribes that were incorporated wholesale into the inelastic fabric of Hindu society and eventually metamorphosed themselves into castes in order to conform to the prevailing social pattern: such are the Āhīrs, cowherds of northern India, the Rājbansi, Kaibartha, Bāgdi of Bengal, the Bhar, Chero in Uttar Pradesh and Bihār, the Jat, Gujar and Meo in the Punjab and Rājasthān. Race castes are less mixed than the occupational ones, although some of them are in fact remnants of

former defeated nations rather than tribes (the Newārs of Nepal, for instance).

There are also many *sectarian* castes organized along religious lines. For instance, the Lingāyat caste in Bombay and southern India, the Baishtams of Bengal. Their modern equivalent in the United States, for instance, would be the all-Negro denomination called "National Baptists, U.S.A.," which is an organization distinct from the all-white Southern Baptists. Again, the only difference between such modern organizations and Indian castes is that they lack the hereditary principle in the rigid and exclusive form which prevails in India.

Among other types of caste are those formed by *race mixture:* such are the Khas of Nepal, who are the offspring of mixed marriages between Rājput immigrants and native yellow-skinned and slanted-eyed women; or the Shāgirdpeshas of Orissa who descend from high-caste men and maidservants; or again the Rājbansi Baruas of Chittagong, who are the descendants of Bengali women and Burmese men.

Yet another type of caste results from *migration and change of occupation:* the Bābhans of Bihār and Uttar Pradesh are former Brāhmins who lost their caste status by becoming farmers. And it should be added that the Brāhmins themselves are of diverse origins and are by no means all of Aryan descent. The Gāyawāls are probably the offspring of a non-Aryan priesthood incorporated into Hinduism, but are now considered a Brāhmin subcaste.

All these autonomous, self-governing groups symbolize the fissiparous tendencies at work in Indian society. All castes are themselves divided into slightly more fluid subcastes whose members can eat together but not intermarry. Exogamous and endogamous groupings prevent all free social intercourse except within very narrow limits. Most castes, and especially the occupational ones, are governed by the *panchāyats,* the council of headmen who rule with an iron fist. Time and again, attempts were made to break down the caste system; until now, all have failed. Great religious reformers—Basava, Kabīr, Rāmānanda—founded casteless sects, but their own sects became new castes in time. The Sikhs and Muslims, who were opposed to the very concept of caste, eventually surrendered to the prevailing atmosphere and formed their own castes. Even the Jews and Syrian Christians of Malabar organized themselves along caste lines.

Caste, in fact, was born out of the profound spirit of tolerance that has always pervaded India. The problem of amalgamating an infinite variety of races and languages combined with widely different religious customs, cultural traditions and psychological tempers resulting from very different geographical settings and climates, without destroying their intrinsic freedom and self-identity, without infringing on their freedom of worship and thought, and without annihilating their distinctive social personalities, could be solved in no other way. In other civilizations, extermination or enslavement solved the problem, and conformity was ruthlessly enforced; not so in India. The caste system actually protected all those who would have been victimized in other societies; the weak became stronger through fraternal union within the group, and the individuals were thus sheltered and protected. Each caste fulfilled a vital function and was part of the social organism as individual cells are part of any living body. All minorities were protected and, if large enough to function autonomously, were always entitled to form themselves into new and separate, self-governing castes. In its original conception, the caste system was one of the noblest social structures ever devised by man.

Caste was the supreme expression of the genius of Indian Civilization: it was all at once labor union, enforcing a kind of rigid social security, and the extreme and final social expression of Civilization's *specialization*, every member of a given cast being trained for a particular function from the day of his birth. It enforced democratic equality within the group, provided a particular religious framework suited to the particular psychological disposition of the given caste members and yet dispensed with dogma by instilling respect in all Indians for multitudes of other forms of worship or thought suited to other castes; it made it possible for Hinduism to be both intensely catholic and yet devoted to religious freedom—freedom that could reach beyond the existing framework of the caste structure by allowing large enough groups to secede and form their own castes. Indians were taught at all times to respect, even encourage *differences* between human beings rather than seek conformity and *uniformity*.

Flexibility applied not only *within* Indian society but also *without*. All foreign invaders eventually became incorporated into the social fabric of India as distinct castes within this expanding system: they were *incorporated* but retained their own distinct character and per-

sonality, instead of being *absorbed* (as barbarians and foreigners were in China) and disappearing completely as separate entities. For instance, the upper social strata of the Scythian invaders became Rājput Ksatriyas (Hūnas, Gurjaras, Maitrakas), while the lower strata formed itself into other distinct castes: Jāts, Āhīrs and Gūjars. And many more were formed over the centuries: the Parihārs (Pratihāras), the Pawārs (Pramāras), the Sīsōdias of Mewār, the Chauhāns, the Chalukyas, and so on.

It should be added, in favor of the Indian caste system, that originally caste was not as rigid an institution as it became after the Muslim invasions in the eleventh century A.D. Endogamy, commensality and craft-exclusiveness were not rigidly enforced; there is plenty of evidence that it was in reaction to the Islamic impact that caste assumed the cruelly oppressive inflexibility that struck the first Europeans who landed on the coast of Malabar in the sixteenth century A.D.—an instinctive mechanism of self-defense on the part of a very old society threatened by an alien Civilization. Perhaps the closest modern parallel would then be the rigorous *apartheid* policy applied to the Union of South Africa's multiracial society.

Finally, on the spiritual plane on which Indian culture took its stand, there was even equality between the castes, since any man was presumed free and able to reach the supreme blessing as defined by Hinduism by merely adhering strictly to his own specific *dharma*. Humble Sūdras could outrank spiritually haughty Brāhmins. And the entire caste system was devised in such a way that it appeared to be patterned after the cosmic order, each caste performing the task for which it seemed destined, just as nature's cosmic forces and living beings co-operate in preserving cosmic order. The world of politics was patterned after the lawless, chaotic jungle; the social world was patterned after a more ideal, lawful and ordered jungle where each animal species would behave as a specific caste, performing its own specific duties, following its own specific ethics, and without bothering about the subjective feelings of other species.

However, the caste system was a Civilization-institution: it did not provide for the complete freedom of creation and expression that is the distinctive characteristic of Culture-eras. Individual originality was stifled and conformity was enforced within the group with extreme rigor. As Jawaharlal Nehru states: "Such an arrangement, while favoring the weak, hinders, to some extent, the strong. It en-

courages the average type at the cost of the abnormal, the bad or the gifted. It levels up or down and individualism has less play in it."[35] And he adds further: "The individual was allowed perfect freedom to think and believe what he liked, but he had to conform strictly to social and communal usage."[36] The great days of individualism and freedom of self-expression were gone with the vanishing Culture. The ultimate good for the individual was to become completely identified with the timeless and classic role that birth (*jāti*) had forced upon him, to become utterly impersonal and detached, and, as an anonymous actor on the stage of life, to play the same part that had already been played the same way before for thousands of years. All personal characteristics, all individual traits had to be melted away by the burning fire of spiritual realization, dissolved into an impersonal attitude suited to its assigned duties in virtue of its past *karma,* to one's assigned but temporary part on this earthly stage. Man's duty was to obliterate his personality and seek release from the toils of this world *within* the caste structure and *beyond* his transient, masklike individuality.

Caste was the final mechanization of Hindu life, implying the complete identification of every man with his social role and, consequently, the mutilation of his individual personality. Every man had the distinctive symbols of his protective deity painted on his forehead, was imprisoned in a fantastic network of taboos, was taught whom to shun and with whom to associate, what to eat and what not to eat, and all these under the threat of the most severe penalties for disregard of the rules. The "accidental" personality of the individual was thus eliminated and the "two aspects of the temporal event— the subjective and the objective—will be joined exactly, and the individual eliminated as a third, intrusive factor."[37] Full compliance with caste rules and dissolution of one's individuality are the safest and shortest road to final release from the awful, endless cycle of births and rebirths. And thus, sacrificed as in all other Civilizations on the altar of "society," the Indian individual marched through his earthly life, bound and fettered, looking not horizontally at the historical road trod by Indian society (since it was not evolving in *time* and was therefore static), but vertically up at the timeless Absolute in the hope that strict compliance with his appointed earthly duties would soon enable him to escape from the infernal round of rebirths.

As in contemporary China, Civilization bred social conformity.

But whereas in China ethics and social conformity were one for all Chinese alike, in India there were as many types of conformity and ethical codes as there were castes. In China we have unity and uniformity, in India plurality and diversity. And since another hallmark of Civilization as opposed to Culture is the emphasis on ethics and morality, it was inevitable that the caste system would have an important bearing on Indian Civilization's conception of ethics (*dharma*) —or rather that the peculiar ethical concepts of Indian Civilization, springing from its underlying philosophic assumptions, had an important part in shaping the caste system. And indeed it is striking that it always conceived of morality as relative rather than absolute, particularized rather than universal. Each caste had its particular code of ethics, different and sometimes radically opposed to those of other groups. Every caste or group had its own form of worship and every form of worship included a certain moral code. The result of this splitting up of morality into divergent fractions can be best seen in its extreme consequences—in the castes and associations of professional thieves and hereditary criminals, who were rigidly organized and used written manuals on the techniques of their profession and were compelled to commit certain types of crimes imposed upon them by the very fact of their being born into a criminal caste.[38] It could even reach the extreme of the bloodthirsty Thugs (*ṭhagī*), worshipers of the goddess Kālī, the robber-stranglers who joined in the greatest and most enduring criminal conspiracy in world history. They were all, in their warped way, perfectly moral men who merely followed one particular *dharma,* even though their code of ethics conflicted with normal human sentiment; none ever showed the slightest compunction about their crimes, no regret, no pity, no remorse.

Long ago, the *Bhagavad Gītā* had warned: "Better one's own dharma though imperfectly performed, than the dharma of another well performed."[39] Every single being should strive to achieve only its own specific perfection. Those who seek a form of perfection that is not suited to their innermost possibilities are bound to fail; in such a way, all activity becomes the activity of professionals. The dangers of such an outlook on ethics are obvious; but this ethical viewpoint is an inevitable consequence of absolute monism, since the Absolute is by definition beyond good and evil, and not just good. As for polytheism, it is obvious that it fragments morality by setting up as many different and yet valid codes of ethics as there are gods to worship.

If, as in China, goodness is identified merely with life-affirmation and applies to anything enhancing the life force, the religious and philosophic assumptions do not matter too much. But if, as in India, life is viewed as evil, as a burden, the normal sense of right and wrong disappears and ethical codes become warped.

The collapse of India's Universal State after Asoka was intimately connected with the rise of the caste system. Indian Civilization, because of its pessimistic and cynical philosophy of politics, was unable to actualize a Universal State such as China's. Instead of a Universal *State,* we have a Universal *Society*—less efficient politically, and yet more resilient and less vulnerable to external attacks, as subsequent history was to prove. The rise of the Brāhmins to supremacy and the decline in power and influence of the politically minded Kṣatriyas implied the triumph of religion over politics. From then on, spiritual authority completely overshadowed temporal rule.

Finally, we have to consider a peculiar consequence of the caste system. By the time it was becoming ossified, there were still large aboriginal populations remaining in inaccessible mountains or jungles strewn all over India (there are still millions of them left today). As Civilization expanded and its economic development increased apace, many aboriginals were brought into the expanding *economic* structure but were left *socially* outside. They could no longer be fitted into a rigid caste system, a system that was still sufficiently elastic to admit into its upper ranks (mostly Kṣatriyas) doughty conquerors who could be tamed and absorbed in no other way—but not elastic enough to admit an enormous influx from down below into Sūdra ranks. So it was that a fast-increasing population of *outcastes,* men who could not fight their way into the social system like the more vigorous barbarians streaming over the northwestern mountain passes, were brought within the pale of Indian Civilization's economic structure but were rigidly excluded socially and religiously. Also known as "untouchables" (or "Pariahs," in Madras), they ranked below the most humble Sūdra. The Caṇḍālas were the most noteworthy of all outcastes, and were enjoined to wear the garments of the dead because their main task was to dispose of the dead; others were the Dom, the Bhangī and the Chuhra. Most outcastes are compelled to perform "unclean" tasks: the Niṣāda are hunters, the Kaivarta fishermen and the Kārāvara leather workers. Soon enough, the outcastes themselves began to organize a sort of hierarchy among their own numbers; some of them, like the Antyāvasāyin, who were a cross

between a Caṇḍāla and a Niṣāda, were despised by all, outcastes among the outcastes. And thus we come to the limit of the caste system, to its lowest level, where human degradation has reached extremes that have never been known in any other historical society.

In modern British times, the official administrative jargon recognized a vast class of underprivileged men and women known as "Scheduled Classes and Tribes," thereby illustrating the fact there is a close link between the clinging to outdated *tribal* forms of social organization and the inferior social status of such groups. Economically, such tribal groups are distinguished from caste Hindus by the fact that they do not undertake regular food production and do not take part in the regular money economy. Having been brought into the Hindu structure after Civilization had been established and at a time when Hindu society was no longer flexible, they remained in a *fossilized* state, perpetuating their tribal organization, unable to contribute to society beyond their bare tribal needs. Such "Scheduled Tribes" are still found in modern times, not only in deep forests, but also in the immediate neighborhoods of vast modern cities.[40]

To sum up: the caste system amounts to a variety of guild socialism resting on strict religious tenets, based on eugenics and protected by drastic social sanctions. It has nothing to do with feudalism since land tenure is completely absent from its tenets.[41] Each caste was internally democratic, self-governing and obeying its own specific norm (*svadharma*). The very complexity, rigidity and democratic autonomy of Indian society organized along caste lines presented, in fact, an insuperable obstacle to absolute despotism. The Indians proved unwilling and unable to set up a Universal State; they proved inept in matters of political organization, but they also made sure that there could never arise a system of autocratic despotism. This was a despotism-proof system. There was only one drawback: Indian Civilization proved itself less able to absorb invaders than Chinese Civilization. Proof against political tyranny from within, it succumbed all too easily to the tyranny of alien conquerors. Even so, it was to the interest of the alien conquerors to keep the self-regulating caste system going; these alien conquerors were content to milk the fat of Indian wealth through taxation, and eventually became just one more caste alongside the others—and were in turn superseded by other, more vigorous conquerors in the course of time.

The Indian caste system, on the whole, was a social replica of the world of the jungle. Just as every animal is born to perform certain

tasks, be he a monkey (deified as the monkey-god Hanumān) or an elephant (deified as the elephant-god Gaṇesa), every human being is born, for good enough reasons, into his appointed station in life. The exceedingly slow evolution of the caste system (there was bound to be *some* evolution over more than two thousand years) no longer followed the relatively quick tempo of historical evolution, of which the Indian soul was never conscious, but the immensely slow tempo of zoological development. Centuries were required to perform alterations that take less than a year in times of relatively fast historical evolution. But it is worth noting that most religious reformers, especially those endowed with monotheistic tendencies and imbued with the spirit of love (*bhakti*), attempted time and again to unfreeze the caste system, as if some secret guilt feeling was always gnawing at this ossified shell of the Indian soul.

After the death of Asoka and the downfall of the Maurya Universal Empire, the living soul of Indian Civilization withdrew from an active shaping of the world. Having evolved in the caste system the strongest possible structure binding every individual hand and foot, from the cradle to the grave, India gave up the idea of a Universal State but preserved the reality of a Universal Society into which all men, whatever their characteristics, could fit—all except the despised *mlechchas*, the non-Indians, the "barbarians."

The result was that the political power and functions of the rulers were extremely limited in Indian Civilization. Many of the duties which in other civilizations devolved upon states, bureaucracies and rulers, were taken over in India by town councils, village *panchāyats* and the heads of the various castes. Town and village councils were freely elected and represented all castes and all segments of society. They controlled taxation, maintained peace and order, acted as judicial bodies. As a modern scholar pointed out,

> The genius of the people for corporate action expressed itself in a variety of self-governing institutions with highly developed constitutions, rules of procedure, and machinery of administration which challenge comparison with modern parliamentary institutions. Reading the election rules of these bodies, the division of villages and districts into electoral units, their rules of debate and standing orders for the conduct of business and maintenance of order in debate, and their committee system, one might wonder whether many standing

orders of the House of Commons and of the London County Council are not derived from the regulations of the ancient local bodies, ecclesiastical councils, and village assemblies of India![42]

Even more than in China, local government remained extremely strong in India, since large political structures were at all times weak and transitory. The political rulers did not make laws; the royal decrees (*sāsana*) were not new laws but concerned the application of existing laws of *dharma* and custom to specific cases. The code of Manu made this plain: "[A king] who knows the sacred law must inquire into the laws of the castes [*jātī*], of the districts [*jānapada*], guilds [*śreni*], and of the families [*kula*]." And he was advised to conform to them strictly. The state merely regulated the relations between these self-governing and autonomous groups.[43] The traditional power of the caste structure was such that the Caesarian rulers were only the executive mouthpieces of the predominant caste. When the first Europeans landed in Hindu India in the sixteenth century, they could hardly understand how restricted were a king's power and influence and could not grasp the fact that ". . . this perfectly orthodox doctrine that the king is the head of the state was at variance with the Brāhmin belief in their own supremacy." Nor could they understand the paradoxical social hierarchy according to which a king might belong to an inferior caste: "When the Nayāk [King] of Madurai—a mere Śūdra—offered a banquet to a thousand Brāhmins, he could not even look at the dishes served to his guests,"[44] . . . for fear of polluting them. His main function, during and after the Mauryas, seems to have been the regulation of economic life. There usually was a considerable amount of state socialism: all mines were owned by the state; pearl fisheries, timber, elephants were the property of the state; there were large state farms; the state owned spinning and weaving factories, shipyards and arsenals.[45] Free enterprise was never an outstanding feature of Indian Civilization. The result, of course, was the need for large bureaucracies and plenty of "red tape." Since India never evolved a really efficient system for the recruitment of its officialdom comparable to China's remarkable mandarin system, nor an equivalent ethical doctrine, the frequent collapses of bureaucratic machineries were largely responsible for the short duration of great empires. Indian rulers found it easier to decentralize by granting a considerable degree of autonomy to local governors, and, in no time, the secession of outlying provinces and

the formation of new independent states broke up the short-lived empires.

The idea of military conquest was acceptable to Indian ethics, but the idea of political and social absorption, integration and loss of personality of groups and nations, which is so natural to the Chinese and is the foundation of their political and social ethics, was repellent to the Indians. Faithful to the idea of *plurality,* which permeates the entire world outlook of the Indians, they always respected distinctions, autonomies and individualities of social units strong enough to function as such—provided they all co-operated and were willing to fit into the indestructible social pattern woven over the centuries. The root of this attitude is undoubtedly the early consciousness of racial distinction and the repugnance felt for miscegenation and racial integration. It was only in the short-lived period of Magadhan Caesarism and triumphant democratic Buddhism that the idea of political and social absorption of defeated nations was accepted (and was strongly advocated by the ruthless *Arthasāstra*). Ever afterward, it was unequivocally condemned; and the difference between "righteous conquest" (implying full autonomy for the conquered element) and "demonic conquest" (implying its absorption and integration and disappearance as a distinct entity) was always emphasized.[46]

In order to get a bird's-eye view of India as she appeared at the height of her Civilization, one can do no better than read the picture drawn by Megasthenes, Greek ambassador to the court of Pāṭaliputra in the days of Candragupta Maurya; he was struck by the fact "that all the inhabitants are free, not a single Indian being a slave," a slight exaggeration but still a remarkable contrast with the slave-ridden world of Classical Greece. He added with admiration that "the simplicity of their laws and their contracts is proved by the fact that they seldom go to law. They have no suits about pledges or deposits, nor do they require either seals or witnesses but make their deposits and confide in each other. . . . truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem. . . . the greater part of the soil is under irrigation and consequently bears two crops in the course of the year. . . . it is accordingly affirmed that famine has never visited India and that there has never been a general scarcity in the supply of nourishing food."[47] We have here an interesting picture of one Civilization looking at another, a superficial glance, no doubt, but still an enlightening one.

VII

The Indian Mind

THE Indian mind is, in many ways, the most profound known to cultural history. Its profundity, however, is only two-dimensional, as it were, since it ignores systematically the metaphysical and spiritual significance of time and history. We have traced the development of this world-outlook from its inception in early Vedic times, this emphasis on "sight" rather than "audition" in the experience of the *ṛṣis*, the spiritual transfiguration of *space* rather than *time*, the development of *plurality* rather than *unity*, and the consequent development of polytheism which indicates that Indian culture accepted the existence of complex psychologies, of split personalities and coexistence of multiple personalities within a single human individual, all of which destroy the unity of character of the individual as well as of society.

Psychological destruction of the unified character of Indian society through acceptance of multitudes of different human types that are irreducible to a common denominator, implied not only polytheism but political fragmentation (the rejection of the Universal State), social diversity and plurality (the caste system); in other words, all the outward expressions of the *spatial* form of perception as opposed to the time-bound, *historical* form. The refusal to grant spiritual significance to the process of *time* entailed collective amnesia, turning one's back on history, on ancestor worship and the principle of hereditary transmission (so strong in China, for instance). The individual's condition on this earth is presumed to be not even remotely related to the virtues and sins of parents and ancestors, or to society, past and present. It is exclusively connected with his individual *karma* and past incarnations: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" To this ever re-

newed question, Indian thought replies unhesitatingly: "This man."[1] In contrast it is worth recalling that the old proverb of Israel, often quoted in the Bible, says explicitly: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."[2] This is the symbol of historical consciousness, of *historical* transmission as opposed to the concept of the transmigration of souls. What sense of history, of the significance of the flow of time can there be for people who use the same expression for yesterday and tomorrow (*kal,* in Hindi)?

Philosophically, this world-outlook is expressed as follows: the Vedānta doctrine, by far the most influential philosophic system in Indian Civilization and the most representative of the Indian temper, states that Ultimate Truth lies beyond the illusionary world of *māyā*. This illusionary world is composed of the objective world of "forms," *rūpa,* and of the corresponding subjective world of "names" or "notions," *nāman*. The combination *nāma-rūpa* includes both the individual man with his mind and senses, and the objects of his perceptions and thoughts—in other words, the entire world, subjective and objective. Furthermore, *all* Indian schools of thought, including the Vedānta, Sāmkhya and Mahāyāna Buddhism emphasize that language and logic are completely inadequate to the task of transcending *nāma-rūpa,* whose basic unreality is due to the fact that it is transient. The seeker after Ultimate Truth, after the permanent and timeless, after pure Being, in other words, looks upon this unreal, transient and ephemeral world as having the "form of Becoming" (*bhāva-rūpa*). So that Becoming—the process of time, i.e., history—is essentially unreal. Since the whole spatial world of nature is caught in the inexorable flow of time, from creation to dissolution, everything becomes as unreal as the Becoming that underlies it. The phenomenal world is made of the same stuff as dreams. What deludes us into believing that this world is real is ignorance (*avidyā*), the subjective counterpart of *māyā,* and ignorance is the root of time. Philosophy's task is to overcome this ignorance, promote knowledge (*vidyā*) and thus tear away the veil of illusionary *māyā*.

Indian thought, seeking Absolute Truth (whatever its name), is thus driven to sublimate space into the Infinite (*ananta* in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*) rather than time into Eternity.[3] Its goal is, psychologically, the boundless rather than the timeless, since there is no inward feeling for the time dimension at all. And the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* gives us the final picture of this Absolute, as seen by the

Indian mind, when it claims that it is "this imperishable Being" across which "is space woven, warp and woof."[4]

By the same token, the purposeful view of life is eliminated. Creation has no specific meaning, since history has no spiritual goal and Śiva will dance the world to destruction with the same cosmic pleasure that Saguṇa Brahman enjoyed when creating it. Life has no aim, no purpose. It is all a sport (*līlayā*), and creation itself is only a cosmic jest, a meaningless play whose stage is the universe of mental and material creation, and whose actors are gods and men. Of course, it is well understood that gods are no more real than the world of physical matter. They are just as much a product of *māyā*, that is, "art," deception, the illusionary creation and display of forms through magic: *māyā* is now essentially Existence as opposed to Reality, is both the cause as creative power and the effect as cosmic flux. And as cause, *māyā* is essentially Śakti, cosmic energy, the eternal female, the seductive Eve nourishing this world of illusion behind which reality hides itself.

Having thus eliminated a whole segment of man's understanding of the world and of himself (his historical consciousness), the most profound Indian thinker resembles a one-eyed man whose single eye is possibly more penetrating in that dimension where it operates, but remains in other respects inferior to those of the two-eyed man, whose vision is three-dimensional, who attempts to keep in sight simultaneously time and eternity. Once this basic characteristic of Indian thought is firmly grasped, it becomes easier to assess both the superiority and inferiority of Indian thought as compared with that of other cultures.

The natural corollary of this philosophical outlook is the assumption that the mind can reach far more profound understanding than that which is produced by discursive logic. In order to communicate this translogical knowledge, Indian philosophy makes ample use of all the symbolism, metaphors and allegories that were progressively brought to birth in the Vedic Age and had served to depict the early polytheism. That is why the most profound philosophical (and psychological) thought in India acknowledges the validity of polytheistic faith: it does not turn its back on it but merely outgrows it. The full emotional flavor of popular worship, the wild luxuriance of popular imagination, the manifold approaches through the multitudes of gods and goddesses to the supreme Brahman, the poetic and artistic insights, everything is preserved, respected and used when con-

venient by the most abstract-minded philosopher. Mythology and philosophy, the lowest and the highest, walk hand in hand, in friendship and co-operation. The various philosophies and religions of India are not mutually exclusive but complementary; they are adapted respectively to all forms of intelligence, from the low-brow (*mandādhikāri*), the middle-brow (*madhyamādhikāri*) and the highbrow (*uttamādhikāri*).[5]

Where Greek philosophy turned its back on Olympian mythology in scorn, Indian philosophy, more wise and more humble, learned to respect its remote ancestor—for this remote ancestor was not dead but still quite alive in the collective unconscious of the Indian masses, its roots deep in popular imagination. The greatness and profundity of Indian philosophy spring from the fact that it never lost touch with the basic realities of human nature. Most of its weaknesses spring also from the same source. In every Hindu sect, every form of worship, every mystical technique, there is an incredible mixture of profound thought and gross superstition, high aims and low goals, penetrating insight and crude naturalism. Empirical truth (*aparā vidyā*) can include anything; but it is only relatively true and represents only an approach to Absolute Truth. To transcend lower, pluralistic forms of understanding does not mean struggling against them or ignoring them, but overcoming them in the contemplation of the higher monistic reality. Most Indian doctrines, Sankara's interpretation of the Vedānta especially, distinguish sharply between the *existent* and the *real*, physics dealing with the existent, metaphysics with the real (which does not *exist*). When Kant separated just as sharply the *phenomenon* (existent) from the *noumenon* (real), he did likewise, although using a different terminology. The existent is *māyā*, the cosmic illusion. Traditional Western thought, on the other hand, impelled by a historical consciousness that is at the source of its development, believes to be both true and real that which is held in common by all men.

It is an amazing thing that men who enjoyed abstract thought and discursive intellectualism as much as the Indians, have almost always emphasized that, ultimately, man's logic and reason can do no more than prove its limitations, display its inability to grasp reality. It gives us the "knowledge" of the thing sought for, but not the thing itself, since Absolute Reality transcends all pairs-of-opposites (*dvandva*). That is why Indian philosophical systems and doc-

trines are known as *darśanas,* from the root *dṛs,* "to see," seeing with the mind's inner eye through a combination of perception, conception and intuition. A *darśana* is not just an intellectual theory but a blend of intuitive insight and logical argumentation, acquired by intuitive experience and upheld by rational demonstration. The purpose of rational demonstration is to clear the ground intellectually, demonstrate the bankruptcy of mere discursive logic and then bring the student to the very threshold of intuitive, mystical and non-communicable apprehension. Then he is on his own. A *darśana* is a total world-picture, the spiritual perception of a soul, accessible not to the merely intelligent but to those who have both intelligence *and* purity of soul. One can see how far the Indian conception of the true philosopher is from the Western.

Contempt for the mere intellect of man is inevitable in Cultures that have no historical outlook. After all, the great achievement of the human intellect does not reside in the exceedingly small understanding of itself and the universe it has reached today, or any other day. It resides in the very fact that it has reached it at all, in its immensely long development all the way from the first amoeba that was quickened to life hundreds of millions of years ago, and evolved through countless metamorphoses to modern man's immensely complex organism which is a cosmos in itself. Taking a purely contemporary view of man's mind, with its obvious shortcomings standing out against the background of what it should be, inevitably entails contempt for it. And, in its turn, contempt for man's mind entails a repugnance for true monotheism, which cannot help being partly anthropomorphic. Those who are historically minded understand that one aspect of the Almighty, and the most vital, is anthropomorphic and that God's greatest glory is not so much the creation of the material, spatial universe (which is only the setting of the stage) as the steady development of man's inner spirit, of his self-knowledge, that which is properly the very core of history.

On the other hand, those who are not historically minded understand only the God-creator of the spatial universe—and what, then, is man's puny personality in the infinite vastness of interstellar space, an infinitesimal particle that has the conceit to believe that the Almighty made him in Its image and that his individual soul is entitled to eternal life? Looked at from this angle, monotheism is no longer comprehensible. The idea of human souls retaining their eternal spiritual identity, in union with God and yet separate as cells within

an infinite spiritual organism, is untenable. Then the monistic view, the true goal of Hindu thought, takes over completely. Brahman is all, the human soul nothing but a fragment of Brahman itself, temporarily enmeshed in the coils of *māyā*. This outlook has been succinctly expressed by one of India's great contemporary philosophers, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: "The anthropomorphic ideas must vanish. They give us substitutes for God, but not the true living God. We must believe in God, the center of life, and not His shadow as reflected in men's minds."[6]

True to their tolerant attitude, Indian thinkers temporarily accept a monotheistic God (Īsvara, or Saguṇa Brahman) as opposed to the true monistic Godhead (Nirguṇa Brahman). The former is a subject dealing with objects (the worshiping human beings), but the latter is supreme because It is beyond both object and subject. Needless to add, the monistic Godhead (and also those enlightened men who claim to have recovered their identity with It) is equally beyond good and evil, with all the unfortunate repercussions we have already noticed in the ethical standards of Indian society. The temporary acceptance of monotheism is only a concession to the overflow of emotional love (*bhakti*) that immature human beings can feel for the Almighty, beings who require a personal God. Since creation is an illusion and life an obstacle to overcome, love, the origin of life, is a superfluous impediment. When it is at last removed, the personal God vanishes like a mirage behind the utterly impersonal Nirguṇa Brahman.

The monists sincerely believe that theirs is the superior outlook and gently look down on monotheists as honest but limited souls who are still wrapped up in the coils of life and love. If they had looked upon history as another universe in which the Almighty's glory is also displayed, they would have had to change their minds. And when they claim, as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan does, that monotheism is the goal of intellectualism, whereas monism is the goal of a transcendence of mere intellectualism, they can only justify their attitude by ignoring the historical dimension altogether. Furthermore, there always existed vague monotheistic tendencies in Indian thought, even in the *Upaniṣads,* and especially in the *Baghavad Gītā.* And Rāmānuja, the most eloquent monotheist of them all, symbolizes the vague awareness of thoughtful Indians of the existence of other categories of understanding; but without consciousness of history, without love and life-affirmation, there can be no true,

consistent monotheism. From the Hindu standpoint, Rāmānuja is still enmeshed in the coils of illusory love (*bhakti*), a feeling which the true monist despises. Yet Rāmānuja himself is a Vedāntist and he cannot help conceding that the world of creation is immaterial to the indifferent Almighty who created it—and through this inner contradiction, destroys his own doctrine.' But he could not help being inconsistent, because the general trend of the holy scriptures compelled him to go against his own inner feelings; and he proved conclusively that, given the basic premises of Indian thought, monotheism was not intellectually defensible.

The last, ultimate and most consistent expression of the Indian world-outlook (philosophically) remains with the monistic Advaita Vedānta, especially Śankara's monumental interpretation of it. It blends perfectly the old Brāhmanic concepts with Buddha's life-negating philosophy (thanks to which Buddhism was for all practical purposes eliminated from India) and adopts the theory of a duality of standpoints outlined previously—monotheism apprehending God through the mere intellect, monism apprehending the Godhead through more penetrating transintellectual devices.

If true understanding must be translogical, Indian thought must inevitably have developed means of apprehension that are quite different from those with which Westerners are familiar. And indeed this is the case. Being far more profound psychologists than either the Greeks or the Westerners, the Indians had been able at an early date to avoid a great many misconceptions that still plague us Westerners today.

The Indians have understood, for instance, the nature of *faith* far more profoundly than any other people—faith (*sraddhā*) as distinguished from mere believing-to-be-true, faith as a psychological condition regardless of what it happens to be focused on. In the early stages of man's inner development, both are merged and undistinguishable. The uncultured truly believes that Krisṇa is a Divine Incarnation, that every word of the Bible is literally true; to him faith and believing-to-be-true are one and the same thing. But as his inner development proceeds and his insight deepens (usually under the shattering impact of the discovery of the unreality of the object of his faith), he comes to understand that faith (in the religious sense) and believing-to-be-true (in the scientific sense) are two entirely different things. He understands that the former deals with subjec-

tive truth and the latter with objective truth, and that the greater the cultural development, the sharper the distinction between subjective and objective conditions. He can believe in something, regardless of whether it has an objective existence or not. Self-realization, the individual's spiritual progress, is all that matters, and all props are welcomed at first, and then discarded. He wants to *be* rather than to *know*. The wiser Indians have understood this better than the wiser Christians; they saw clearly that real inner progress signifies constant changes of planes of consciousness rather than mere intellectual gymnastics.

Such changes in planes of consciousness are brought about by meditation and contemplation—choosing an idea or mental image, adhering to it faithfully, concentrating on it consciously with all the strength of one's will power, and thereby reacting on one's unconscious and gradually shaping it to suit one's purposes. All changes in planes of consciousness are brought about by changes in the contents of the unconscious—through the endlessly repetitive action of prayers and formulas (*mantra*), the hypnotic inner vision of mental formation, all of which eventually produce permanent changes in the psycho-physical equilibrium of the devotee. This automatically accelerates inner progress in the direction of self-mastery and self-recognition, until such time that the idea or image, or whatever prop was used, is discarded, having fulfilled its purpose. The devotee then knows that religious faith is not dependent on concrete religious images or ideas, that it is totally independent of objective facts, that true spirit has neither name nor form, and yet is reachable through mystical introspection. He still sees and recognizes objective facts but now sees *through* them and understands them to be symbols of deeper spiritual reality. Irrational or rather trans-rational faith and discursive intellect are not divorced or in conflict but progress hand in hand.

The Indian mental process is therefore quite different from the Western. Like the Chinese, Indian philosophies are philosophies of "transformation," whereas Greek and Western philosophies merely "inform." Man's nature, character, personality must be fundamentally altered before he can hope to understand. To the Indian, religion is an awareness of ultimate reality, not a theory about it; religion is psychology and method rather than theology and dogma. The aim of religion is the actual realization of the devotee—intuition of reality (*brahmānubhava*), insight into truth (*brahmadarśana*), di-

rect apprehension of reality (*brahmasākshātkāra*). In order to in-
duce these grammar-transcending insights, mere logical reflection
(*manana*) is insufficient. Rational arguments cannot reveal the
highest truths; however, they do remove obstacles to our acceptance
of personal enlightenment. Reason and logic make understandable
and universal what was mysterious and personal; but the mere in-
tellect is no substitute for the thing itself; it knows *about* but does
not know *it*. Therefore, it soon has to be transcended with the help of
metaphors and allegories. The *guru* never asks his *śiṣya* to analyze,
synthesize, dissect and evolve intellectual structures encased in logic.
He teaches him to meditate one aphorism or one symbol at a time,
to let it sink into him until he has actually altered his whole person-
ality—in fact, until his whole intellectual frame of reference has
changed. The very brevity of the aphoristic *sūtras* is designed to ap-
peal to the most profound intuitive faculties, never to discursive logic.

The disciple, therefore, reaches new levels of consciousnness that
are hermetically sealed to the most brilliant intellects, imprisoned as
they are in the steely web of reason and logic, trapped within one
immutable set of intellectual references. He discards inadequate in-
struments of perception and fashions better ones, gradually leaving
behind him the normal intellectual gymnastics. Being more intensely
spiritual than the Chinese or Japanese, the Indian even discards the
medium of art as a major help toward self-realization—with some
unfortunate consequences for Indian art. He slowly withdraws into
himself, rises gradually through planes of consciousness that are not
logically related—and eventually, out of the contingent world alto-
gether. To all Indian thinkers, Buddhists and Hindus alike, *knowl-
edge* and *will* are one and the same thing; willing and thinking are
both expressed by the same word, *cetanā*. And so we discover that
while the Westerner advances from thought to thought, from ab-
stract concept to abstract concept, deducing, inducing, differentiat-
ing, integrating, analyzing, synthesizing, the Indian, on the other
hand, advances from subjective condition to subjective condition.
The Westerner delves deeper and deeper into the domain of pure
abstraction, from particular to general concepts, from experimental
work to scientific knowledge of the objective world; the Indian
changes ceaselessly the form of his consciousness.

Obviously there can be no rational connection between the In-
dian's various states of Being, and only through *personal experience*
can one ever get to know them. The major portion of Western phi-

losophy is made up of intellectual systems cemented by hard and fast laws dictated by logic, joining together the observed phenomenon and pure abstractions deduced from observation. Indian philosophy, unfettered by the legacy of Greek logic and the dogmatic structure of Gothic Christianity (the spiritual inheritance of Roman legalism), is basically an empirical description of the possible evolution of man from one level of consciousness to higher ones. Western thought expands intellectually on the surface of the visible world, whereas Indian thought concentrates on deepening understanding by way of constant changes of planes of consciousness. Religiously speaking, Westerners are theologians (even when they are atheists), whereas Indians are psychologists; the former concentrate on the objective side of things, Indians on the subjective side.

The specific profundity of Indian thought is therefore out of reach for most foreigners, be they Asians or Westerners. Indians have been able to rise above their biological boundaries and roam at will in transcendental realms from which the intellect is forever barred. But few of them ever come back, probably caught like skin divers by some irresistible "fascination of the deep." The few who do come back are the great saints and teachers who illuminate the long-drawn-out history of India up to the present day, the only substantial products of a Civilization that was petrified in most other respects.

There is, of course, another side to this picture. The valuable writings of Indian culture belong either to the realm of startling and brilliant poetry, of oceanic epics such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* with their colossal jumble of fantastic tales and their appeal to wild imaginations—or to the brief, stinging *sūtras,* flashes of lightning over which disciples ponder endlessly and which appeal to pure intuition. But, by Greek or Western standards, Indian philosophic rationalism is often extremely weak, and often the logical thread in Indian thought is so tenuous as to be nonexistent. All Indian schools of philosophy use the same basic terms—*avidyā, māyā, puruṣa, jīva,* and so on—but they all differ as to the precise significance of these terms. There is a complete lack of that severe discipline of logic which is the positive side of our Greek inheritance. Since the Indians do not attach any real metaphysical significance to intellectual formations and arguments, it is useless to seek for any. Indian intellectualism is therefore worse than any comparable intellectualism in the West, resting as it does on a permanently fluctuating ground, whereas Western efforts were at least firmly anchored to

the two pillars of Greek logic and a Christian faith based on the dialectic of historical development. Nothing is more bewildering to a Westerner than the perfect ease with which Indian thinkers accept fully contradictory notions and display a remarkable inconsistency of thought.

The incredible absurdity of some philosophic systems has been pungently described in connection with a succinct description of Gaudapāda's doctrine. Gaudapāda, a late Vedāntist, "had nothing better to say than that an unreal soul is trying to escape from an unreal bondage in an unreal world to accomplish an unreal supreme good[8] . . ." And since words can never be but an approximation, most philosophic controversies in India fall to the ground; they are meaningless. As the eminent Bhāskara, a philosopher living in the ninth century A.D., pointed out, why shouldn't the Sāṁkhya theory of multiplicity or monotheism coexist with Śankara's monism in those grammar-transcending realms anyway? Words, after all, are man-made.

In this connection, it is worth pointing out that the root of the European scientific attitude lies precisely in its much-derided theological rather than psychological outlook. It is in medieval scholasticism, in the intellectual gymnastics of such mental giants as Duns Scotus, Thomas of Aquinas and Abelard, that the modern scientific discipline has its distant roots. They raised, as no other Culture ever did, the word-symbol to an almost absolute, mathematical precision which contrasts sharply with the vagueness of Sanskrit or Pāli. It made possible the independence of the abstract idea from aesthetic impression. Thought was no longer lettered by the subjective effect of individual emotion but could enter into independent relations with the world of nature—and understand its inner laws as no other Culture ever could. Medieval scholasticism took up where the Greek Logos left off and made European languages the very basis of contemporary science. It is in this powerful objectivity (which, from a psychological standpoint, was so injurious to the Western soul), this concentration of the European mind on the task of overpowering the objective world of nature, that the secret lies of European scientific achievements. Indian Culture never had anything like this utter objectivity—indeed, would not have been interested in it if it had been offered free—and consequently never developed scientifically.

The profundity of Indian thought is an unquestionable reality, but its greatness resides in its accurate diagnosis of the limitations of

reason and on the methods with which it overcomes the weaknesses of discursive logic, not in its development of logic and reason *per se*. All the elaborate systems of Hindu orthodoxy—Nyāya, the syllogistic system, Vaiśeṣika with its concepts of atoms and void, or Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā and Sāṁkhya—have no real weight compared with the methods which the Indians have devised to get, once and for all, beyond the intellect and to which they have attached far greater importance. And it has been aptly stated that, weary of ratiocination and scholastic hairsplitting, "Indian thought overcame at last its own besetting passion for metaphysics and philosophizing. The impact of the actual experience gained through yogic absorption carried the field against the logical arrangement of the way of speculative knowledge (*jnāna-mārga*). Thought, the mirror of reality, was shattered by the force of reality itself when the truth was realized at the end of the path of introspection."[9] What was this trans-intellectual path of introspection?

Artistic perception, that great medium through which Chinese culture was able to transcend the intellect and reach an immediate apprehension of the immanent spiritual essence, was never regarded by the Indians as anything but a secondary medium. The concrete-minded, life-affirming Chinese artist withdrew from the world of form and matter, only to return with powerfully suggestive works of art which became, in their turn, eminently suggestive props for other seekers of the Tao. The extrovert Chinese yearn to *express,* to translate into form their ecstasies, to communicate to their fellow men the visions conjured by their nature-mysticism. The introverted Indians, on the other hand, yearn to *impress* themselves as means toward self-realization and care little for expression.

Throughout history, the best among the Indians have taken a puritan view of art: music, painting, architecture, every aspect of beauty was considered dangerous because it increased man's attachment to this world of illusion. Properly understood, art might lead the disciple to higher truths, but the dangers were too great. Art was indeed tolerated as an inescapable form of illusory glamour, not as the higher form of spiritual feeling as in China. Early Buddhism, of course, represented the zenith of this anti-artistic feeling. Every rule has its exceptions, and Indian art has produced masterpieces in the days of the Guptas—especially painting such as the remarkable frescoes in the Ajantā caves. But the real, poetic spirituality which

suffuses Chinese art is rare in India, where art became mostly the means of self-expression of the uneducated masses.

This is why Indian plastic arts give an impression of uncontrollable vitality, of jungle-like pullulation. Indian art is the greatest expression of purely physical imagination, the outward expression of nonunified souls, of human personalities that have not, as yet, been condensed into psychological unity. It is a popular art, temple towers solidly based on the earth rather than sublime and ethereal, handsome and scantily dressed gods and goddesses seated or with feet firmly planted on the ground, usually cheerful as befits a culture devoid of the spirit of tragedy; even ascetics look well fed and happy. One can feel that the trammels of the flesh kept Indian art firmly in their grip and very rarely let the artist soar away into more spiritual realms.

Yet the Indian artists did not really seek to immerse themselves in the elements of the phenomenal world but rather sought to extract, out of the apparently accidental or arbitrary, the individual item that could be taken out of the stream of time, typified and immortalized—a secure, immovable resting place of contemplation out of the bewildering bustle of phenomena. Indian art did not immortalize that which is wholly unique or original; there was no more portrait painting in India than there were biographies. What was immortalized was the abstract stereotype encased in law-determined forms. The Western artist projects himself into inanimate nature; this allows him to take full cognition of the object—that is, of nature—to grasp its three-dimensional appearance and its inner laws, and, eventually, dominate it. The Indian artist, on the other hand, sees nature as all too animated by a pantheistic soul-force and seeks rather withdrawal for fear of being overwhelmed by natural life; in his withdrawal, he abstracts his impressions into stereotyped works of art. He does not seek, like the Westerner, to *dominate* nature; nor does he seek, like the Chinese artist, to *immerse* himself into nature; he only seeks *escape* from it altogether. In point of fact, and in keeping with the world-outlook of Indian culture, he seeks to put an end to his own psychic activities, which he unconsciously projects into the world of nature.

More than any other art form, music betrays the innermost soul of a culture, and Indian music is no exception. Hearing (music) in general is the sense of time, whereas sight (plastic arts) is the sense of space. Music is really pure time-expression, devoid of all spatial

dimensions, unable to portray spatial objects, essentially evanescent. It follows logically, from all that has already been noted concerning the Indian attitude toward time and history, that Indian culture would instinctively seek to transform its music into a timeless form of expression. And so it did. The *rāg,* or mode, is the special feature of Indian music. A traditional *rāg* cannot be noted down because it is essentially extemporization; notation would be almost meaningless. The same *rāg* can be sung or played a thousand times and yet never be the same twice. The *rāg* does not portray a tune, because a tune is time-bound, ephemeral, limited; after the last note, the tune dies and all is over. A *rāg* portrays what is presumably timeless—moods, sentiments, feelings. It is, as has often been remarked, the "music of the astral world," a delicate turning away from the transient phenomenon, from temporary shapes and forms, from illusionary *māyā*.

Indian music is, like all non-Western music, depthless, that is, without harmony. And like most non-harmonic musics, it uses multitudes of microtones (*śruti*)—which always make it sound out of tune to Western ears. The Indian theory of music claims that the normal human ear can perceive sixty-six different *śrutis,* although only twenty-two are commonly used. The important point, however, is not so much the microtonal inflections as the fact that it is the *interval* rather than the note that is sung or played. Contrary to Western music, there is continuity of sound in Indian music where *consonance* gives a fluid quality thanks to which sounds merge imperceptibly into one another; no wonder that Western music, to traditional Indians, sounds "full of holes." And unlike Western music, which frequently alters and contrasts its moods and sentiments, Indian music concentrates utterly on one particular mood with the help of a constantly repeated tonic sound, delves into it, develops and cultivates it relentlessly until the hypnotic suggestion can no longer be resisted by the audience: "The musician can then . . . lead his audience through the magic of sound to a depth and intensity of feeling undreamt of in other musical systems."[10] Each *rāg* is adapted to a particular time of the day or night: *Bhairava* (awe and fear) at dawn, *Megha* (peace and calm) in the morning, *Dīpaka* and *Srīrāga* (love) in the afternoon, *Kauśika* (joy and laughter) and *Hindola* (love) at night. *Rāgs* should never be played at any but the appointed time. What is important in Indian music is to memorize *moods,* not melodies; where the Westerner reads, the Indian memorizes: the mode is everything, the tune nothing.

Music, as an art-form, was closer to the heart of Indian culture than plastic arts—perhaps because of its very formlessness, its hypnotic suggestion of spiritual realms situated far beyond the transient world of form and matter from which plastic arts never seemed able to escape. Many of the greatest Indian thinkers, some of the most profound and negative, almost pessimistic monists who despised all feeling of love and aesthetic emotion, were simultaneously musicians of the first rank. Yet, even music had to give way to an even more profound form of rapture, one that takes the devotee not only way above the world of sight and form and matter, but even above the most delicate, insubstantial sound: pure mysticism.

Before undertaking a study of Indian mysticism, it is essential to contrast the general mystical attitude with the non-mystical. We have now become aware of the major differences between the Chinese and Indian minds—the Chinese concentration on historical development and historical philosophizing as a substitute for religious seeking, its humanism and its earthy, unspiritual attitude which contrasts so strongly with the Indian's lack of awareness of history, with his intense religious feeling which sublimates space and seeks the timeless Infinite. We must now go one step further and contrast the Indian outlook with that of the emerging Culture of the Middle East. The clue to their entirely different outlooks lies in the fundamental difference between the two great forms of religious feeling known to history, the two poles of man's religious expression: the *mystical* and the *prophetic*.

The basic psychic attitude evidenced in mysticism is a denial of the impulse of life springing from weariness of the world, an unreserved surrender to the infinite and timeless which reaches its peak in mystical ecstasy. On the other hand, the basic psychic attitude of prophetism is a fierce will-to-live springing from an intense love for life and the world: "Mysticism is passive, quietist, resigned and contemplative; the prophetic religion is active, challenging, desiring, ethical."[11]

Religious feeling in India was entirely mystical, as is only natural in a people who have no feeling for past or future but only seek to sublimate the present moment into immortal timelessness; the religions and philosophies of India were concerned only with eternity, whereas the emerging creeds of the Middle East sought to see eternity through the unfolding of time. Mysticism is the true expression of

feminine natures who surrender with delicate and passive enthusiasm, whereas prophetism is virile and energetic—and emphasizes the ethical standpoint which the mystic tends to ignore. More important still, prophetism sees God's Revelation in history, whereas mysticism sees it in spatial nature. Mysticism is indifferent to the original uniqueness of each human personality, whereas prophetism emphasizes it and grants it eternal life. Mysticism is indifferent to the world, prophetism wills to transform it. Indeed, these are the two poles of religious feeling so far experienced by man. And India has known no prophets, only mystics—but more so than any other civilization.

It now remains to understand how the prophetic feeling developed in the Middle East and how it was first expressed by its true originators, those Aryan cousins of the Indo-Aryans who chose to emigrate to the bleak Iranian highlands rather than accompany their brethren down into the warm plains of Hindustan. This new world-outlook was expressed with great power and conviction by Zoroaster and by the Magian clergy of Persia; and it is striking that their starting point was the same as that of the Vedic Aryans, that they both used a common fund of feelings and ideas. Almost the same terms were used in both Sanskrit and in Avestan. The early Aryan tribesmen venerated two kinds of deities, *ahuras* and *daevas;* but their fates diverged when the Aryan tribesmen split geographically; those that became demons in India (*asuras*) became beneficent deities in Persia and vice versa. Common names of gods (Yama, Mitra, and so on) persisted long after the world-outlooks of Iranians and Indians had begun to assume entirely different shapes.

The Magian religion and its Zoroastrian offshoot based their teaching on a qualified dualism—but in opposition to the Indian dualism (Jain, or Sāṁkhya) which opposed matter and spirit, it emphasized the coexistence of two primeval, antagonistic spirits. Explained at great length in the *Bundahishn,* Zoroastrianism states that Ohrmazd (God) struggles fiercely against Ahriman (Satan), who is just as much a pure spirit wholly divorced from matter. The difference between them is that Ohrmazd is identified only with infinite time, not infinite space which He has to share with Ahriman. God, therefore, is essentially infinite time; and whereas God is bound only by space, Satan is bound by both space and time.[12] Here, for the first time, was history introduced as a new element in metaphysical speculation, and here was the very process of time justified on spiritual grounds: although God and Satan are coexistent, God

will eventually triumph over Satan, but *only at the end of time*. History and creation are the chosen instruments of God for his triumph, and man is the maker of history: man protects God against Satan; God needs man and creation as much as man needs Him. Thus, suffering is fully justified and an all-merciful God is not responsible for it; material creation is the trap set by God for the eventual destruction of Satan. As such, matter, the world of creation, life and love, all these are supremely good in this essentially life-affirming doctrine.

One can see that, for the first time, a religious philosophy expounds the origins of creation in such a way that it explains how time hinges on eternity. This Zoroastrian conception of time then linked up, after the Captivity of Babylon, with the Hebrews' own Biblical awareness of history as the self-revelation of God, to give birth to the great prophetic religions of the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). This new outlook achieved full expression when the Hellenized Jew Philo of Alexandria unequivocally stated: "Time is thought by the wickedest people to be a divinity who deprives willing people of essential being; by good men it is considered to be the Cause of the things of the world, but to the wisest and best it does not seem time, but God."[13] One can see the unfathomable chasm opening between the Indian and the Middle Eastern outlooks. Indian thought remains silent on all vital questions concerning history and claims that creation is only a cosmic sport (*līlā*) of the Almighty. It seeks escape from life and creation altogether, and in mysticism it finds the perfect instrument for this flight from life.

Mysticism has its place in all great religions (except Zoroastrianism), but never has it had such a field day as in India, where it never came into conflict with frozen dogmas or the prophetic impulse. The great German mystic Meister Eckhart stated the mystical standpoint when he claimed that "the Soul is created in a place between Time and Eternity: with its highest powers it touches Eternity, with its lower Time."[14] Why then bother with the lowest when you can concentrate on the highest, claims Indian thought? Psychologically, if we distinguish three main faculties in man—thought, feeling and will —the mystic gives the primacy to *feeling*, whereas the prophet gives it to *will*. The former is basically an introvert, the latter an extrovert. The mystic claims that neither outgoing action prompted by the will nor indwelling knowledge produced by thought can reach the Abso-

lute. This can be achieved only by going deeper into the hidden self and foregoing both thought and action, that is, by reaching pure Being—not knowing *about,* not forceful, willful Becoming, just Being. The pure mystic is not compelled to *express* his visions as the artist does: he merely seeks release from the fetters of the contingent world altogther.

The mystic is the real devotee of "Hegelian" dialectics, although not in an intellectual sense—or to put it in another way, dialectics are the intellectualization of intuitive insight. To the mystic, intellectual dialectics are only a pale reflection of the underlying Reality, a simple reflection in the mirror of man's mind. All mystics state that "life as perceived by the human minds shows an inveterate tendency to arrange itself in triads: that if they proclaim the number Three in the heavens, they can also point to it as dominating everywhere upon the earth."[15] Although this was stated by Western mystics, it could just as well have been stated by mystics everywhere. Let us again recall the basic triads of various Cultures: the Chinese Yin and Yang joined together by the process of the Tao; India's division of the Nirguṇa Brahman (who is beyond all process and all pairs-of-opposites) into Saguṇa Brahman (the Creator), Viṣṇu (the Preserver) and Śiva (the Destroyer); Christianity's division of the Godhead into God the Father (Creator), Christ the Son (the Word, also called the Repairer by the great Christian mystic Jacob Boehme), joined together by the Holy Ghost.

The real task of the mystic is to overcome all basic oppositions between fundamental terms, get beyond all pairs-of-opposites (*dvandva*) and eventually reach the ultimate synthesis, the Absolute. But he does not want to do it intellectually: he does not want to know *about,* he wants to *be.* The dialectical terms of the mystic are not intellectual *concepts* such as thesis and antithesis, but alternating *states of being;* not objective ideas but subjective feelings of pain and pleasure: "The soul, as it treads the ascending spiral of its road towards reality, experiences alternately the sunshine and the shade."[16] But mysticism claims that the "Becoming" aspect of this progress is really an illusion, since it is merely a *recovery* of timeless Being; as William Blake expressed it, "The Spiritual States of the Soul are all Eternal."[17]

Mystics usually decline to be articulate in their descriptions of actual mystical experiences: these experiences are not logically transferable, are not communicable; they exist only for those who experi-

urge seeks that which is complementary and is at the root of man's social instinct—but can also reverse itself and lead to mysticism because the latter is a sublimated form of sexual impulse. The same is true of the self-preservation instinct, which can lead to a cool mysticism of utter detachment as a matter of self-protection.

It is quite clear that in India a conjunction of certain psychological traits and a certain amount of devitalization at the end of its great cultural development has emphasized the self-preservation side of mysticism. Utter detachment without longing for a personal God is only an expression of this self-preservation instinct, but sublimated by mysticism. That is where personal integration leads and that is where Indian mysticism stops—in what Christians call "limbo," a spiritual state out of the presence of God, the soul being like a beautifully polished glass remaining forever empty, waiting for an eternal wine it ignores. The more vigorous mysticism of the West, less psychological, either starts from there or leaps beyond it toward the Almighty, ready for union with God, like a log of wood longing to be consumed by an eternal fire.

Most of the similes used by mystics describe the feeling of love for God in appropriate sexual imagery, the mystic, of course, playing the feminine role and God the masculine. This is understandable in the West, since the Christian God is essentially a God of love who delights in His creation, in life itself. But in India this conception is hardly possible, either in Sāṁkhya terms, since there is no God at all, or in Vedānta, since all is One and the rest a mere veil of illusion; there can be no union or communion since there is no real separation. Furthermore, the Indian does not believe that every human soul is original and unique, and that this "uniqueness" is eternal; the Christian mystic sees in this union between the soul and God the realization of God's eternal idea of this particular soul. To the Indian, the human personality and soul is neither unique nor eternal; a true Civilization man, he has come to think in terms of stereotypes.

What Indian mysticism, and more or less all extreme mysticism that is not counterbalanced by a prophetic strain, finally amounts to is a return to the state of original innocence, a *retrograde* step, an undoing of the work of creation rather than a completion of that work. It is a plunge back into the collective unconscious, into that pre-natal psychic element that is generically present in all men and is "prior to personal experience."[20] Mysticism transcends this recessive condition only when it returns to the world as an active agent,

playing its part in history—but then it is no longer mysticism but rather a form of prophetism, more or less conscious.

The Indian mystic is a complete immanentist. How far he is from the vigorous Western mystic can be gauged from the following quotation of the great St. John of the Cross: "Never forget that God is inaccessible. Ask not therefore how far your powers may comprehend Him, your feeling penetrate Him. Fear thus to content yourself with too little, and deprive your soul of the agility which it needs in order to mount up to Him."[21] It is no wonder, therefore, that Western mystics should display more aggressive strength than their Indian counterparts—Ruysbroeck's famous Combat in which man's spirit and God grapple violently (*De Ornatu Spiritualium Nuptiarum*), Meister Eckhart's classification of the three highest forces of the soul: knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), the violent aspiration toward the Most High (*die Aufstrebende*), and the will (*der Wille*).[22] The Western mystic is more dynamic, strives with greater virility; but then, in a Culture that is essentially history-conscious, there is often something of the prophetic strain in most Western Christian mystics.

One can approach the study of Indian mysticism from different angles: its historical development, the philosophic assumptions and theories underlying it, the specific qualities that differentiate it from all others. We shall approach the problem from these various angles in succession and thus attempt to draw a comprehensive picture of that very phenomenon that is most difficult to explain in words— that grammar-transcending ecstasy known the world over as mysticism.

The historical roots of Indian mysticism probably reach far back in time, beyond the Aryan invasions to the days of the Harappā Civilization. Whatever was transmitted from the dying civilization to the young Aryan barbarians in the way of mystical knowledge, the first rudiments of mysticism appear in the *Vedas* as *tapas,* that is, originally "heat," then asceticism. In the era of cultural development, mysticism, like anything else, develops spontaneously and its development depends largely—as it has until now in the West—on the natural endowments of gifted individuals. Culture-mysticism is still an *art*. With the advent of Civilization, the same activities come under a new heading: what was art becomes *science* and technique. That is the major difference between *tapas* and Yoga: Yoga is a civilization-technique, an expansion and systematized, scientific de-

velopment of the early *tapas* of the *Atharva Veda.* Even though the term *Yoga* is already mentioned along with *tapas* in some *Upani-ṣads,* it became a true science only when Patanjali wrote his famous *Yoga Sūtra* in the second century B.C.

We can thus see the true historical position of the *yogi:* he is not necessarily a born mystic (whose natural talents correspond to those of an inspired artist) and he studies the science of Yoga in order to become one. Yoga is the *systematization* of mysticism, the end product of Civilization which seeks to develop techniques applicable to all human beings rather than rely on the spontaneous gifts of nature which may or may not be granted. It is the *democratic* application of universal education (for all who want it, at least) of a Civilization devoted to the individual search for pure Being. It is the systematic codification of the mystical way, the well-marked highway on which anyone who cares to can tread toward the inexpressible Absolute Reality. It is essentially an empirical, practical method, and only secondarily a theory (largely derived from Sāṁkhya philosophy). Thanks to it, the Indians no longer had to rely on exceptionally gifted mystics or on born geniuses, or (as the Christians do) on the "Grace" of the Almighty; they could breed them almost artificially. The *yogis* themselves have always claimed that a high degree of mental concentration can well replace exceptional talent.

The great mystic—that is, he who blends exceptional talent with the technique of Yoga—is Indian Civilization's finest product, the ultimate perfection reached by India's best men. And because nothing is so difficult as to rationalize and discipline mysticism, Indian Civilization deserves full credit for having devised the best system for reaching this goal. Yoga understands and teaches all the dangers inherent to mystical experience: the perversion of many states of ecstasy, the danger of uncontrolled visions and hallucinations. The *yogi* seeks, first of all, to *control* all mystical experiences through an effort of both will and reason. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan writes truly that "When the personality of the mystic rises to a level which is disconcerting to his normal, self-centered life, certain disorders show themselves. . . . When new wine is poured in old bottles, they burst. Man must become a new vessel, a new creature, if he is to bear the spiritual light. That is why the Hindu system of Yoga insists on the development of healthy nerves."[23]

The technique of Yoga, as a scientific method, was evolved during the age of transition leading from Culture to Civilization, the age

of doubt, scepticism, agnosticism and even outright atheism and materialism. The philosophy underlying it was resolutely atheistic; it was only later, when the post-Buddhist religious awakening took place, that a personal deity (not a personal God in the monotheistic sense), namely Īsvara, was introduced.[24] In fact, it is an unnecessary intrusion, which often contradicted the basic philosophical assumptions underlying Yoga. Īsvara is not the creator of the world, and the goal of Yoga is not union with Īsvara but the utter, eternal isolation of the liberated soul. Īsvara is no god at all but a convenient mental prop, a greater soul helping the others to liberate themselves, a "special *puruṣa* untouched by troubles, deeds, their consequences or hopes."[25] The fact that Yoga's metaphysical assumptions are based on Sāṁkhya philosophy, that is, on the eternal and immutable dualism of *puruṣa* (spirit) and *prakṛti* (matter), must not blind us to the fact that Yoga is essentially a neutral, well-tried *technique,* compatible with any philosophy or religion, with Buddhism as with all forms of Vedāntism. Even the Advaita Vedānta's most extreme monism can be treated as a practical dualism when the ontological play on words is removed: for what is the coexistence of illusionary *māyā* and real Brahman if not a practical dualism of the same order as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa?*

The main contribution of Sāṁkhya philosophy and Yoga doctrine to Indian knowledge is their emphasis on psychology, on a sort of "proto-scientific psychological functionalism"[26] which uses the mythical cosmology of the dualistic Jains but, instead of bothering about the rise and fall of the universe, ponders only over the rise and fall of human consciousness: the only worthwhile activity is, not the study of the external world's structure, but introspection. The end result of introspection, Sāṁkhya informs us, is the liberation of the life-monad (*puruṣa*) from the enfolding grasp of both the gross body (*sthūla,* which dissolves anyway at death) and the subtle body (*sūkṣma*), the carrier of human personality beyond death through the cycles of reincarnations, which Yoga seeks to bring under control and then dissolve. Liberated at last, the life-monad dwells in timeless isolation and quiescence, a pure spirit which is far removed, however, from what Christians conceive of as spirit: it is without attributes of any kind, indifferent—pure consciousness.

We must keep in mind the fact that Sāṁkhya philosophy and Yoga represent the tradition of dualistic realism in Indian thought, which has operated throughout history as the antithesis of the main

Indian outlook: Vedānta's idealistic monism. It is due to Indian tolerance that, eventually, both were seen as two basic terms of a dialectic process, representing two complementary psychological attitudes, rather than irreconcilable opponents.[27] Both are part of Hindu orthodoxy. The main historic function of Sāṁkhya was to take over Buddha's negative doctrine, its atheistic outlook, its indifference to Vedic ritual and its emphasis on suffering and the means to put an end to it. No wonder that Buddhism eventually vanished from India! The irony was that Sāṁkhya philosophy was already flourishing before Buddha was born, that Buddhist texts refer to it and that part of early Buddhist doctrine is derived from it, and yet that Sāṁkhya eventually managed to expel its natural child from the land of its birth.

Yoga is based on a rigorous control of *prāṇa* (breath), a vital force or spirit that animates both man and the universe. Control of *prāṇa* is what the so-called "nature-mystic" achieves when he enters into full communion with nature, without ever reaching any real transcendental plane of consciousness. This is pantheistic mysticism, a half-measure of true mystical experience in which God, in any form, is not apprehended at all. What is apprehended is an amazing enlargement of the personality beyond all its natural bounds—a state that can be induced artificially with the help of a variety of stimulants and drugs. In other words, nature-mystics experience a sort of dissolution of the personality into nature's infinite space. They may or may not be pantheists; it is all a matter of choosing a label and identifying nature with God, instead of opposing both terms to one another. This is, as we know, a perfect description of Chinese (mainly Taoist or Buddhist) mysticism, a nature mysticism which is responsible for the incomparable achievements of Chinese art.

But this is not at all the case with mysticism in India (or the Middle East and Western Europe). Indian mysticism is by no means inspired by nature and, as has already been pointed out, there is far less trace of true spiritualism in Indian art than is usually assumed. Tropical and subtropical nature is too overpowering to strike man's imagination and entrance his sensitivity or emotions; luxuriant jungles and scorching heat are more conducive to an attempted escape from life and creation altogether. Nature in India lacks the subtle shades, the sparse but discreet vegetation, the delicate alternation of seasons that are found further north and east, in China and

Japan. Indian mysticism could find no solace in nature, only in man himself. The Chinese mystic is, basically, an extrovert who longs to expand his personality, to be "oned" with nature. The Indian mystic is an introvert who longs to cut himself off from nature and, plunging back into his own unconscious, seek spiritual evaporation out of the world.

All mystics seek eternity, a suspension of the inexorable flow of time (that very element in which the *prophet* feels most at home), and therefore, a reprieve from death. Proust stated it well when he said in his *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu:* "One minute delivered from the order of time creates in us, that we may enjoy it, the man delivered from the order of time. . . . It is understandable that the word 'death' can have no meaning for him: situated, as he is, outside time, what could he fear from the future?"[28] In his fleeting moments of timeless rapture, Proust realizes that he discovers another, new "self" which is usually kept in abeyance, a self that is the sum total of his past life accumulated and enduring in his unconscious, when the gates to his unconscious are suddenly thrown open. In his case, he does not merge with nature but, quite the reverse, he reaches a complete realization of his own self, a complete "integration" of his personality. Proust is a genuine, spontaneous example of what Yoga claims to achieve when it calls itself the "method of reintegration," a method consisting in putting together a personality that has been—as every personality is in everyday life—torn asunder by waking-consciousness, which then becomes a personality that is beyond time and therefore beyond death. Integration of the personality implies, in the jargon of modern analysts, the "marriage" of the male, or surface-self (*animus*), and female, or deep-self (*anima*), parts of the psyche, the reunion of the conscious and unconscious, also of the rational and intuitive—all of which is achieved by the transfer of the personality's center of gravity from the selfish ego to a new superego.

This achievement is diametrically opposed to the nature-mystic's. As in the case of Proust, for example, we now have the true yogic isolation (*kaivalya*) of the specific immortal soul, an isolation of the Sāṁkhya monad (*puruṣa*) outside of time and nature (*prakṛti*); this is true "individuation." And as the *Sāṁkhya-Kārikā* claims: "As a dancer, after showing herself to the audience, leaves off dancing, so does Nature reveal herself to the soul and then disappear. . . . Content that she has been seen by the soul, she never again

exposes herself to him."[29] The final, explicit aim of Yoga is the complete and eternal isolation of the soul or life-monad *puruṣa* from the coils of nature, that is of *prakṛti*. Extracting the *puruṣa* from the surrounding world of matter very much like salt from water, the *yogi* seeks pure Being: he is his own psychoanalyst, looks into his personality (that is, his *past*), integrates conscious and unconscious minds, dissolves the fundamental complexes and inhibitions, and at last isolates his innermost self forever, "serene, supreme, omniscient, and alone."[30]

There is no more universal problem besetting man than the *unification* of his inner self. Most human beings have a heterogeneous personality consisting in discordances and inner conflicts that can often destroy their lives. Most of them manage to survive with incompletely unified constitutions because the life of *action* which their economic circumstances compel them to lead provides at least partial unification—between the *objective* and *subjective* aspects of their lives during the moments of action, at least. Most human beings have neither the time nor the inclination to be introspective; they live and act on the surface of external things without bothering overmuch about the depths of their being. But as soon as introspection starts and self-examination proceeds, most human beings reveal all the discordant elements that remain buried otherwise. And no human beings have taken greater pains to delve into their inner being than the Indians; and none have displayed such heterogeneous personalities, such nonunified egos. Unconsciously faithful to the main characteristic of their culture, that is, to *plurality*, devoted to a life of contemplation rather than action, living in the world of *space,* which is essentially the domain of plurality, rather than the world of *time,* which is the domain of unity, the Indians have exhibited in their plastic arts and in the accounts of their mystical raptures all the traits of personalities disturbed by inner chaos. But like all human beings, they have felt the urge to *unify* their psyches, to *integrate* their personalities, to straighten out their inconsistencies and organize their inner self as an organized *cosmos* rather than let it remain a *chaos.* Their diverse impulses and aspirations cannot be allowed to work at cross-purposes and come in conflict with one another; they cannot be allowed to remain in separate and parallel compartments; they have to be organized, subordinated to one another and form a smoothly functioning hierarchy. This is the primary function of the discipline of Yoga as a method of "re-integration": Yoga is essen-

tially the "yoke" that binds the diverse and perhaps conflicting elements of the personality together, and then fuses them in the process of "self-realization." What plastic art could not achieve, Yoga achieves through its well-tried technique.

The doctrine of Yoga displays an amazing knowledge of all relations between physiological and mental processes and goes far beyond the possibilities that scientific theory and experiment can possibly confirm today: it seems to claim, in effect (we shall see later what it actually believes that it is achieving), the power not merely to alter man's normal psychic equilibrium, but to create entirely new elements which it materializes apparently out of nowhere. This tribute to the creative power of the psyche to reach out beyond matter, as theoretically postulated by the intellect, and return into matter with new physical possibilities, opens infinite horizons onto an uncharted universe from which logic and reason shrink. Scientific proofs were never required and never given, and nothing save personal experimentation could possibly throw any light on this remarkable technique. In itself a completely amoral system that could be used for good or for evil purposes, Yoga can give to the devotee on his way to self-realization many unusual powers. Conscious of the dangers presented by an impersonal, soulless technique in unworthy hands, initiation was never granted from *guru* to *śiṣya* without physical, moral and intellectual guarantees of the first order. Knowledge without requisite moral guarantees is worse than no knowledge at all, since it creates automatically obstacles on the way to self-realization, obstacles that did not exist before. It sets the seeker far back in his quest for enlightenment, a fact that had already been made quite clear in the *Isavasya Upaniṣad:* "Into blind darkness pass they who worship ignorance; into still greater darkness they who are content with knowledge."[31]

Adjusting itself to the great psychological and physiological differences existing in such a vast and varied country as India, modifying methods and techniques to suit diverse temperaments—rational or intuitive, passionate or emotional, sensuous or ascetic—Yoga practices began to penetrate every Indian sect with its mild contempt for mere intellectual ratiocination. Although technically improved over the centuries, the Yoga system as propounded by Patanjali has remained basically unchanged for over two thousand years. The road along which the disciple has to progress is divided into eight sections, which must be traversed in rigid sequence and are known as: *yama,*

perfect morality so as to avoid making an improper use of the tremendous forces unloosened in the human body; *niyama,* exact observance of practical, everyday rules of hygiene and physical exercises; *āsana,* postures tending to still all involuntary movements and sensations; *prāṇāyāma,* regulation of the breath which entails regulation of the flow of thoughts in the mind; *pratyāhāra,* withdrawal of thoughts from concrete things; *dhāraṇā,* total concentration on one single thought, evolving into *dhyāna,* pure, hypnotic contemplation which annihilates all thought and ends in the contemplative trance of *samādhi,* the ecstatic and ineffable contemplation where object and subject are merged and where the ego-mind dissolves, losing itself in Absolute Reality.

The first objective result of such training is to increase immeasurably the powers of concentration and to still the involuntary activities of the mind, a result obtained by the conjunction of physical and mental efforts. The second is to vitalize desired concepts through a form of auto-suggestion—it might be Īśvara or any other *iṣṭa-devatā* (deity of one's choice). Then the disciple transcends and dissolves the concepts or images themselves, demonstrating to himself, in the process, the relativity of all concepts and all planes of consciousness. What dialectics achieve intellectually, the mystic achieves by alternating his states of being, and eventually transcending all pairs-of-opposites (*dvandva*).[32]

The final goal of Yoga discipline is to reach *mokṣa,* the ultimate liberation of the life-monad *puruṣa.* Two stages are clearly marked in this ultimate goal, according to whether the disciple wishes to remain in this world or not. In the first case, he remains content with the *savikalpa-samādhi,* the supraconscious ecstasy in which the dualism object-subject still exists; in the second, he escapes from life altogether through the ultimate *nirvikalpa-samādhi,* the final obliteration of all dualism and the final liberation of the soul.

The institution of Yoga, like that of caste, soon became a *pattern.* The system grew and proliferated, and eventually came to include all types of human activity; everything eventually became part of Yoga, which served the useful purpose of adapting itself to every psychological temper and of spiritualizing every form of human endeavor by giving it an ultimate, spiritual goal. So there came into being a purely physical *haṭha-yoga* based on bodily gymnastics combined with breath and thought-control, an intellectual *jñāna-yoga* aiming at the transcendence of the intellect through dialectical paradoxes, a

karma-yoga of action teaching selfless activity detached from all hopes of reward, a more general "royal" way known as *rāja-yoga* which combines all the others and is the most difficult. Concession was even made to more emotional tempers and a *bhakti-yoga* of love eventually came into being, based on the premise that one cannot really know a thing without loving it. Yoga became the supreme, manifold technique of liberation, a technique accepted by all Hindu and most Buddhist sects, adapted to all philosophies and all psychological dispositions.

The *yogi* actually does not pretend to create new elements or develop supranormal powers: he merely claims to recover what is latent in every human being, to actualize what is only potential. The Indian seeker after religious truth never *becomes* anything different —or so, at least, he thinks. He merely strives to recover what he really *is*. He seeks not Becoming, but Being. Whatever the conception of the approach to the final release—whether Sāṁkhya's "discriminating insight" (*viveka*), Vedānta's "transcendental self" (Ātman-Brahman), Buddhism's "enlightenment" (*bodhi*) or Yoga's "isolation-integration" (*kaivalya*)—the end result is always the same, and so is the psychological outlook that leads to it: the process is actually believed to be static, to restore to proper use something that was always there but was impaired, temporarily unused.[33] The process is comparable to the cleaning of a blurred mirror or the polishing of a crystal. The root of this outlook is an instinctive desire not to acquire, grow, develop and progress, but, on the contrary, to return to the primal state before life, thought, desire, action and suffering were born.

Nothing illustrates better the Hindu idea of the illusionary nature of Becoming than the fact that the Sanskrit word for "it is," is in fact "it becomes" (*bhavati*), whereas the true "it is" (*asti*) is reserved for philosophic logic. All things tangible are transient and therefore unreal. There is also the Sanskrit expression for "universe" or "world": *jagat,* meaning "that which moves, the transitory, the ever-changing," in other words, that which is fundamentally unreal.[34] Only that which "is," only pure Being which is steadfast, imperishable and changeless, is Real. Yoga, in order to be consistent, cannot help claiming that it merely uncovers what *is* rather than creates what was not yet; it is essentially the "method of re-integration," the *recovery* of something pre-existent. This recovery the *yogi*

achieves only through a conscious synthesis of all his still-uncoordinated faculties, a focusing of all his qualities on the one and only worthy goal: self-realization. Yoga doctrine is at one with Vedānta, which claims that the world is not different from (*ananya*) and nonindependent of (*avyatirikta*) Brahman.[35] Becoming is the great cosmic illusion—that is the supreme expression of the Indian mind.

The Winter of Civilization

THE collapse of the Universal Empire of the Mauryas left India with a Universal Society, not a Universal State. That was the final political and social form in which its life stream coagulated and survived until alien Civilizations clashed with, and overpowered, it. It was largely the unethical cynicism of the Indian philosophy of politics that was responsible for this remarkable inability to build an enduring Universal State such as the other great Civilizations have known. In spite of invasions and internal upheavals, the Chinese were able to build and preserve, until our days, the political unity of their society, in spite of temporary breakdowns. Although the ruthless and cynical Legalists had been the main agents of the unification of the Chinese world under the Caesarian rule of Shih Huang-ti, the Chinese discarded their doctrine as soon as it had fulfilled its purpose, and reverted to a modified form of Confucianism: thereafter, Chinese statesmanship and ethics were viewed as inseparable. Not so in India, where politics were viewed as a replica of the lawless world of the jungle. Indian political philosophy was never able to overcome the cynicism of Kautilya's *Arthasāstra*. This attitude, a result of the Indian world-outlook, its indifference toward all worldly matters, was largely responsible for the collapse of the Indian world into an anarchic medley of unstable and quarreling states—and for its eventual incorporation into the domain of expanding alien Civilizations (Islam and the West) permeated with a stronger feeling for the ethics of statesmanship. Indians did not really care; they had turned inward, and the best of them were completely immersed in religious mysticism and had forsaken the world of politics and history, for which they had nothing but contempt.

Far away, in a remote corner of their unconscious, however, there did remain an Indian ideal of the wise, strong, generous and just *cakravartin,* the omnipotent Ruler of the World with the sun wheel, who would put an end to all wars and revolutions—an idea that

was, most of the time, quite remote from concrete application but did find a partial embodiment, once in a while. The Caesarian rulers gradually assumed the semidivine title of *trātāra*—a metamorphosis equivalent to that of Rome's executive dignity from Julius Caesar to the "divine" Diocletian. India was not as isolated as China, and soon after the collapse of the Mauryan Empire, foreign invasions had started in the northwest. The most important invaders were the Kuṣāṇas, a branch of the powerful barbarian people known as Yueh-chi, who poured down into India toward the end of the first century B.C. and established their rule over a large slice of northwest India, modern Afghanistan and part of the Oxus River basin. This area was actually the meeting ground of four distinct influences: Chinese, Indian, late Hellenistic and the rising Persian influence. The powerful empires created by these Central Asian barbarians borrowed forms, concepts and ideals from all sides and blended them more or less happily. In the matter of royal titles, for instance, the Kuṣāṇas took over the Chinese concept of Son of Heaven and translated it as *devaputra,* "Son of the Gods." One of their most celebrated rulers, Kaniṣka, turned west and assumed the title of *Kaïsara,* "Caesar."[1]

It was in the days when the center of gravity had shifted from the plains of the Ganges to the northwest that Mahāyāna Buddhism assumed its full stature as a new religion that seemed to proclaim all the metaphysical concepts and ideals that were diametrically opposed to Gautama Buddha's original pessimism. The former respect and veneration for an evaporated Teacher gradually gave way to the emotional worship of a Saviour still alive in transcendental realms. Kaniṣka took the initiative of calling a new council of the whole Buddhist organization; then and there, in disputations between Hīnayānists and Mahāyānists, the great Mahāyāna religion was compelled to formulate its exegesis with great precision. Profound philosophers such as Nāgārjuna and Asvaghoṣa established the subtle metaphysical doctrine of this new creed, in which Indian thought blended with the far more vigorous, dynamic, life-affirming concepts of the new prophetic creeds of the Middle East. Zoroastrian influence was strong in the northwest and gave Mahāyāna Buddhism its prophetic concept of the *Sōshyan,* the Saviour who, at the end of time, will lead the good forces of light to final victory over the evil forces of darkness. So came into being a whole chain of Buddhas, past and present, of which Gautama was only one. And about the beginning of the Christian era, the cult of Maitreya, the "future"

Buddha, was already widespread. Under these alien influences, Asvaghoṣa transformed the traditional Indian outlook as Hegel transformed that of Parmenides, established a connection between Being and Becoming, and propounded a general doctrine that was close enough to Bergsonian philosophy. Soon, however, polytheism also invaded Mahāyāna and alongside the new eternal God, Ādi Buddha, other deities begin to appear: Amitābha, Avalokitesvara, and so on, all aspects of the Supreme Being suited to the needs of different types of men. Nāgārjuna went so far as to accept such Hindu deities as Viṣṇu, Śiva and Kālī, along with multitudes of Bodhisattvas, angels and so forth. And although Mahāyānist metaphysics was extremely profound, the doors were wide open to emotional worship and love (*bhakti*). Mahāyāna Buddhism was essentially a synthetic religion, but an eminently successful one.

In all respects, this Mahāyānist creed was a remarkable blend of the religion of the *Baghavad Gītā* and of life-affirming influences from the Middle East, a religion that was no longer tied, as Hinduism was, to a specific human society with specific laws, social and political organizations; it became a universal religion, with universal appeal, a living synthesis of many different creeds, but still predominantly Indian in spirit and philosophic insight. This is what made it easy for a Yueh-chi chieftain to introduce it to China, where it began to take root after the collapse of the great Han dynasty.[2] It spread to Mongolia, Korea, Japan, and directly from India to Tibet. Everywhere its profound philosophy overawed all those who became converts, even the highly civilized Chinese, who had never evolved anything like it—but saw in it a remarkable elaboration of many earlier Taoist insights.

The hybrid civilization that developed in northwest India and "White India" (modern Afghanistan) also expressed itself in what is known as the art of Gandhāra, in which the blend of Indian, Iranian and Greek forms is even more striking than it is in Mahāyāna doctrine. An Indian scholar has well depicted this school of art that has attracted exaggerated attention in the West, far beyond its intrinsic aesthetic merits:

Gandhāra art is in fact a phase of provincial art, mixed with Indian elements, and adapted to the illustration of Buddhist legends. The influence of the western forms on all later Indian and Chinese Buddhist art is clearly traceable: but the actual art of Gandhāra

gives the impression of profound insincerity, for the complacent expression and somewhat foppish costume of the Boddhisattvas, and the effeminate and listless gesture of the Buddha figures but faintly express the spiritual energy of Buddhist thought. From the Western point of view also the art must be regarded as even more decadent than that of Roman art within the Roman Empire: for truly, "in the long sands and flats of Roman realism the stream of Greek inspiration was lost for ever," and there is no better evidence of this than the art of Gandhāra.[3]

We should note also that it was obviously a corruption of much older art forms developed in the great days when Indian Culture was blooming:

It is of interest to observe also the manner in which certain Indian symbols are awkwardly and imperfectly interpreted, for this affords proof, if that were needed, that the types in question are of older, and Indian origin. A clear case is that of the lotus seat which is the symbol of the Buddha's spiritual purity or divinity. The seated Buddha of Gandhāra is insecurely and uncomfortably balanced on the prickly petals of a disproportionately small lotus, and this defect at once destroys the sense of repose which is above all essential to the figure of the *yogi* . . . and in immediate conflict with the Yoga texts which declare that the seat of mediation must be firm and easy (*sthira-sukha*). We see before us the work of foreign craftsmen imitating Indian formulae which they did not understand. We cannot think of this as an original and autochthonous art, despite its historical interest, and it is certainly not primitive in the sense in which this word is used by artists.[4]

Indeed, it is essentially decadent art, blending the decadences of both Roman and Indian Civilizations. This hybrid civilization came more or less to an end in the middle of the third century when Vāsudeva, one of Kaniṣka's successors was crushed in battle by the ruling Sāsānians of Persia. From then on, the whole Northwest area was gradually wrenched from the Indian world, brought under the cultural influence of Iran, preparatory to being incorporated in the future world of Islam. But it is worth noting that until then, an effective alliance linked the Roman Empire and the northwest Indian power against their common enemy: Iran, first under the Parthians, then under the Sāsānians.

The jungle-like world of Indian politics retained its anarchic character in the rest of India, even though we have an abortive attempt at Indian reunification in the days of the Guptas, from the third to the sixth centuries A.D. We do not know exactly how the Kuṣāṇa Empire collapsed in the third century A.D., but we know that, once more, the center of gravity of northern India shifted back to the Indian "Rome," to Pāṭaliputra. What we know of that period is mostly due to Chinese travelers who came to India on pilgrimages (at a time when Indians went to China as Buddhist missionaries). We know from Fa Hien who visited Pāṭaliputra in the fifth century A.D. that the magnificent palaces built seven hundred years before by Asoka were still standing;[5] the Greeks in the third century B.C. had judged them to be the finest in the world, and the Chinese who visited them in Gupta times felt nothing but awe and admiration. A comparison between the Greek and Chinese descriptions of life in India, seven hundred years apart, reveals great admiration from all concerned for the remarkable civilization displayed under their eyes; they differ insofar as the severe system of government of the Mauryas, with its countless spies and secret service, seems to have mellowed somewhat by the time of the Guptas; but this is perhaps due to different standpoints.

For all that, the so-called Gupta Empire was nothing like the Universal Empire of the Mauryas. And as an Indian historian asserts, "no extant golden age drama or other literature makes direct reference to any Gupta. . . . Only the *purāṇas* among contemporary documents mention the early Guptas, contemptuously grouped with many other petty kings."[6] It was only a small forgotten realm, rediscovered by European archeology in the nineteenth century, its presumed greatness and glory promoted out of all proportions by the rising Indian nationalism in the twentieth century as an example of "nationalist revival" in ancient times. As the same Indian historian explains, "Far from the Guptas reviving nationalism, it was nationalism that revived the Guptas."[7]

One of the most remarkable features of that period was the increasingly frequent contacts between India and China—India sending missionaries, China sending back pilgrims. It is a striking fact that in all relations between the two Civilizations, the Chinese was always the recipient and the Indian the donor.

Toward the end of the fifth century A.D., a new wave of invasions burst into India, from the northwest as usual. More than five hun-

dred years after the Yueh-chi, the Hūnas (Huns) crossed over the same passes, the floodgates having been opened by a temporary weakening of the great Persian Empire. As their predecessors had before them, the Huns eventually disappeared as a separate entity in India, their powerful stream merging into India's human ocean.

The Indian political world went back to its anarchic medley of quarreling states and countless dynasties, many of which are forever lost to history, because Indians kept no historical records and reports from foreign travelers were lacking. We know, for instance, a great deal about King Harṣa of Kanauj because of the voluminous reports of another celebrated Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang; but such streaks of light only deepen the surrounding darkness.

From now on, the rise and fall of dynasties and states is of no interest whatsoever. All these happenings took place in a sort of "zoological" world far removed from the mainstreams of history proper. The real India no longer moved, no longer progressed—except insofar as it borrowed many new sciences from the Middle East. As in China the intellectual mandarins rose to supremacy over the corpse of doomed aristocracies, so in India a completely changed body of Brāhmin intellectuals attained supremacy after the downfall of the Kṣatriya aristocracies: in both cases, the scholars (Chinese *mandarins* and India *pandits*) took over from the politico-military classes. The difference, of course, was that China had no castes and that the mandarins were recruited through severe intellectual examinations, whereas the Brāhmins (theoretically, at least) formed a hereditary caste. A further difference lay in the essentially ethical character of China's political administration, whereas Indian politics continued to run in the grooves laid down by its cynical political scientists.

From then on, the major tendencies were centrifugal in India, centripetal in China; in India we have political plurality, in China political unity. India had a Universal Society rather than a Universal State, a society so tightly organized that the free play of politics was considerably restricted by a constantly growing network of autonomous castes, self-governing village and town councils, all fettered by rigid and unbreakable traditions and internal laws, all of which was under strict Brāhmin supervision. Most villages and towns (compared by the Greek ambassador Megasthenes in the third century B.C. to independent little republics) were ruled by councils freely elected, whose members were chosen among all castes and represented all interests.[9] Councils had complete freedom in matters af-

feeting taxation, justice, individual rights and police. Next to the *panchāyats*, and also cutting across caste divisions when need be, there were multitudes of labor unions and guilds (*śreni*) and clubs (*pūga*), regulating working hours and wages, empowered to enforce their decisions with fines and safeguarding the professional interests of their members. Local government was based on self-governing urban and provincial corporations (*paura* and *jānapada*) and multitudes of communal organizations (*samiti, sangha, sabhā, nitaya*), all of which lasted thousands of years, all through the Hindu and Muslim eras, until they faded away in the nineteenth century.

Political anarchy could do little harm to a society that was in all essentials self-ruled and self-administered and eventually either destroyed or absorbed its conquerors and masters. Foreign invaders were largely powerless; and as long as they brought no alien culture of their own to India, they were digested in no time by an all-absorbing society. As in China after Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, so in India after Asoka the age of great, meaningful revolutions had come to an end. Political changes were just surface phenomena, ripples on the surface of India's vast human ocean; the age of tidal waves shaking the whole of Indian society to its depths was closed.

The real life of India was religious; and it was in the religious realms that significant changes took place, rather than in the political or social world. The utter mechanization of the Indian's external life, fitting him at birth into the intricate social machinery like a tiny cog, was actually favorable to his inner freedom—if he had any inner life at all. The elaborate specialization of every segment of the society, and the fact that every Indian was trained from the cradle for his appointed social functions, saved a great deal of time and effort. This self-regulating machinery saved Indian society from itself, in the sense that no human society could ever have survived with the world outlook imparted by its intellectual leaders. The life-denying vision of the Vedāntist would have destroyed Indian society if the great bulk of the people had not instinctively counteracted it with the help of life-affirming creeds emphasizing the positive side of things. The world of *māyā* was no illusion for the Indian masses, even though it was only an antechamber to spiritual realms beyond death.

The Brāhmins were free to be monistic Vedāntists and look upon the world of *māyā* as an illusion; but the bulk of the non-Brāhmins,

whether prince or pauper, wanted no part of it. They rejected an impersonal and cold monism, and instead adopted a strange mixture of vague theism focused on one or another aspect of the triune Brahman (Śiva or Viṣṇu), and a fabulous polytheism that surrounded these supreme gods with myriads of minor deities. The pantheism of the ancient Brāhmanism survived side by side with the more pronounced theism of the new, post-Buddhist Hinduism. In the winter of Civilization, a whole human society experiences collectively the same psychological introversion as an individual human soul in the last years of its terrestrial life. Just as the human soul "possesses in some degree historical strata, the oldest stratum of which would correspond to the unconscious,"[9] so does a compact human society actually *revert* to the reminiscences of its childhood (the Vedic Age in the case of India). From what the modern psychologists call the "collective unconscious" wells up a whole world of archaic symbols common to all who belong to the same culture: this is the typical religious "revival" that seizes human societies on the threshold of Civilization—no longer a *creative* religious impulse that forges new myths and symbols, but an awakening of more or less dormant impulses that bring out of the collective unconscious the garbled remains of the Culture's springtime symbolism.

We can only surmise as to whether alien influences impinged on Hinduism; they must have been to an extent responsible for the rise of the two great branches of later Hinduism, Vaiṣṇavism and Saivism, both of them primarily theistic creeds, focused respectively on Viṣṇu and Śiva. On the religious and popular level, a proliferating Hinduism swallowed Buddhism whole and added it as another branch to its massive tree. However much Buddhism may have tried to become a *religion,* it never quite succeeded in overcoming its agnostic origins and its negative ancestry: it was a *pūjā* (worship) and a *dharma* (code of ethics); but it had no rites concerned with the most important features of men's lives: birth, marriage, death. So that even Buddhist families had to resort to Brāhmin priests to officiate on those occasions (on which even the most irreligious men feel a slight awakening of their religious instinct). Unable or unwilling to propose any satisfactory substitute for the traditional rites of family life, Buddhism virtually abdicated as an independent religion and eventually let itself be absorbed by a far more comprehensive Hinduism. Originally, Gautama Buddha had been the Great Ascetic (*mahāśramaṇa*); the emotional people of Magadha had soon trans-

formed him into the Great Compassionate One (*mahākārunika*); and gradually Buddha metamorphosed himself into Śiva in his ascetic character, into Viṣṇu in his role as the unselfish lover of humanity.

With the appearance of Vaiṣṇavism and Saivism, we pass from pantheism to theism, from one impersonal Being to a *personal* god. But, again, no sect was exclusive or antagonistic toward the others; like the sacred banyan tree, one powerful trunk emerges from its Vedic roots, swells through its Brāhmanical metamorphosis and blooms into Hinduism's multitudes of sects more or less loosely organized around the worships of Śiva and Viṣṇu. In turn, these two great religious systems split themselves up into two main branches: the "right-hand" path followers who worshiped Śiva or Viṣṇu in their total aspect, and the "left-hand" path followers who worshiped exclusively the female side of the deities. This was the origin of the new cult of Tantra.

It was inevitable that the feeling of love (*bhakti*) which is inseparable from life itself should eventually manifest itself in something like the Tantric cult. Tantra's fundamental characteristic was a full, unconditional acceptance of life and the world of creation as they are, whereas the *jnāna* intellectual denied their reality. The former was life-affirming, the latter life-denying. The latter, in fact, was the representative of a petrified Civilization's intellect, rational, coldly logical and sterile. The greatest modern exponent of Tantra, Sri Rāmakrishna, defined Tantra thus: "The bhaktas accept all the states of consciousness. They take the waking state to be real also. They don't think the world to be illusory, like a dream. They say that the universe is a manifestation of God's power and glory. God has created all these—sky, stars, moon, sun, mountains, ocean, men, animals. They constitute His glory. . . . He is within us, in our hearts. Again, He is outside."[10] *Jnāna,* the knowledge that is obtained through radical negation (*neti, neti*), leads to the Absolute, impersonal God of monism. But *bhakti,* the progressive affirmation of unquenchable love, leads to something else, to the worship of the cosmic force of the universe, *sakti,* as symbolized by the goddess Kālī.

In Tantra we see finally the bankruptcy of the male divinities of the Vedic pantheon, the ultimate bankruptcy also of the life-denying philosophers. The primordial instinct reasserts itself, blindly unintellectual, but witness to the enduring vitality of the Indian people, who would have disappeared from the face of the earth if they had

all adopted the Vedāntic outlook. The complete retreat from the world-negating mood of the philosopher is accomplished. From the "Apollonian" attitude of the Vedānta, the Tantric devotee travels all the way to the "Dionysian" acceptance of life with its joys and sufferings, with its refusal to escape cowardly from the coils of a now venerated matter (*prakṛti*). The life-affirming Tantra also broke with the Aryan tradition of the patriarchal *Vedas* and restored the pre-Aryan worship of the Mother Goddess "whose cult is rooted in the Neolithic past"[11] of India but had been overshadowed for more than a thousand years by the male divinities of the Aryan-Vedic pantheon.

Yet even Tantra did not exclude its opposite. The Tantric devotee at all times acknowledged the supreme authority of the *Vedas* and was an integral part of Hindu orthodoxy: "Indeed, the mixture of Tantric and Vedāntic traits in modern Hindu life, ritual and thought is so intimate that they present themselves as an organic whole"[12]— and both, catering separately to the emotions and the intellect, present themselves jointly as the final synthesis of India's Civilization. The popular, optimistic and almost sensuous aspect of Tantra is the natural complement of the more negative and intellectually aristocratic Vedānta in its complete acceptance and fusion of the four basic pursuits of man: prosperity (*artha*), sensual love (*kāma*), earthly duties (*dharma*) and final release (*mokṣa*). The too literal interpretation of the Tantric broad-mindedness gave rise to incredible and unbridled excesses, but its positive contributions to the life of Hinduism overshadow its harmful effects. The Tantric was as life-affirming as Vedic man but as introspective as the life-denying Vedāntin, and always emphasized that man must rise *through* nature, not *against* it. This was a complete return to the very sources of Indian Culture, but incorporating on the way the world-negating mood of Indian philosophy. The sensuous and spiritual aspects of the world are now viewed as indivisible and through full enjoyment of the world (through food, drink and sex), the Tantric disciple (*sadhaka*) can hope to overcome the world of dualism just as well as those who frown upon them.

In Tantra, Hinduism finally expresses most completely its catholic rites and devotions: consecrations, transubstantiations, incense and offerings accompany yogic meditation. More than anything else, Tantra has given free rein to the development of the powers of the imagination. And nowhere as in India has the power of imagination

been able to recreate, in art and in the metamorphosed devotee himself, a whole phantasmagoric world. Sri Rāmakrishna said, at one time, that "The Divine Mother revealed to me in the Kālī temple that it was She who had become everything."[13] But what is really Kālī, as described by Tantra texts? Here she is presented to the devotee: "One should adore with liquors and oblations that Kālī who has a terrible gaping mouth and uncombed hair; who has four hands and a splendid garland formed of the heads of the giants she has slain and whose blood she has drunk; who is as black as the large clouds and has the whole sky for her clothes; who has a string of skulls round her neck and a throat besmeared with blood; who wears ear-rings (consisting of two dead bodies); who carries two dead bodies in her hands; whose form is awful and who dwells in burning-grounds (for consuming corpses)."[14] That is the Divine Mother of the gentle saint Sri Rāmakrishna—also the goddess of the criminal Thugs. We are far from the opposite pole of Hinduism, from the pale, cold, ascetic Vedānta, in this Dionysian worship of all concrete forms, and it is to Tantra that India owes its most remarkable artistic achievements—these weird pullulations, these renderings of a world of inexhaustible forms, both delightful and horrifying, that are still visible in Elura, Māmallapuram, Elephanta or Bhājā. Away from the world of history, out of the stream of time, the sensual wealth and power of visualized intuition of the Indians was now religiously reconciled with the world of nature. Vedānta satisfied the intellectual, but the artist could not live without Tantra. We are also far, here, from the subtle and ethereal arts of the Far East in which harmony, balance and spiritual penetration dominate. India is the home of extremes, of violent tensions between unbridled sensuality and inordinate asceticism, of exquisite sainthood and horrifying deviltry—a Civilization devoted to plurality, in which fantastic extremes are not antagonistic but live side by side, alternating co-operatively like terms of a majestic dialectical process.

INDIA AND ASIA

India's Moonlight Civilizations:
South India and Southeast Asia

AS IN China, full-blown Civilization overcame Culture in the northern areas before it had had a chance to penetrate deeply into the south. The part played by the Yellow River and the Yangtze in China was played by the Indus and the Ganges in India. In both cases, the southern areas, far removed from the broad plains of the north, were destined to fall, sooner or later, under the sway of imperialistic Civilizations and become incorporated into their expanding domains. South China and South India were in those days the respective ends of the world for their looming Civilizations, and no other civilization disputed them to their northern mentors. And in both cases, the "civilizing" process of their southern neighbors eventually gave their respective Civilizations new leases on life which their advanced age and ossification would not have warranted otherwise. The southern areas had a great geopolitical advantage over the northern regions: while the latter were repeatedly devastated and weakened by barbarian invasions, they were safe from alien inroads, and therefore more prosperous and freer to devote themselves to cultural pursuits. In both cases, the south remained distinct from the rest of the subcontinents, incompletely incorporated, often unorthodox. The differing racial strains, the darker skins, the shorter statures, the persistent linguistic differences (Dravidian languages were to Sanskrit India what Cantonese was to Mandarin China) and all the atavistic inclinations marked them off sharply.

But in both cases, again, there was a middle land, both geographically and chronologically: in China, the country south of the Yangtze, and the Deccan in India, already incorporated into the expanding societies at the time of their transition from Culture to

Civilization—but as *colonial* areas, incompletely civilized. The Deccan was known to the Indians as South Land (*dakshināpatha*) and was the last one to be actually overrun by the Indo-Aryans from the north. Stretching down south of the Vindhya mountain ranges to the Tungabhadra River, this peninsular India was covered with dense jungles, populated by aboriginal tribes akin to the old Dasyus (the sworn enemies of the Vedic Aryans). Penetration across the thickly forested Vindhyas was extremely difficult and hazardous, but the irrepressible Aryans could not be kept out, and from the seventh century B.C. onward, they overran the Deccan in increasing numbers, civilizing the aboriginal tribes and establishing "colonial" empires. They gave their languages and literatures (evolving into Mahārāshtri Prakrit, ancestor of the modern Marāthī language), their artistic styles and technology, their social structure and political ideas. But as late as the travels of the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien, the Deccan was still sparsely populated and dangerous, swarming with leopards, tigers, snakes and monkeys.

The Deccan really enters history after the collapse of the Maurya Empire, when the Dravidian-speaking Āndhras, who were probably Telugus, founded an enduring state that included most of the Deccan —and lasted almost five hundred years. It is likely that when northern India was overrun by the Yueh-chis, and even more so when the Huns devastated northern India five hundred years later, the Deccan became a refuge for many northerners. Buddhists and Hindus lived side by side peacefully; the caste system was established on the pattern of northern India; trade guilds became extremely powerful and commerce was active. Village and city self-government, managed by the *naigama sabhā*, was as well established as in the north. The people were as warlike as their Marātha descendants proved to be, and were able to halt all Central Asian invaders—until Islam came along. In all respects, the Deccan became thoroughly Hinduized, incorporated lock, stock and barrel into an expanding Indian Civilization.

This was not at all the case in South India proper, the area beyond the Venkata Hills known to the northerners as *Tamilakam*, Tamil Land (occasionally Draviḍa country). Audacious Brāhmins and Buddhist missionaries had penetrated it at some unknown time, but had found strong barbaric kingdoms that would not submit to northern rule. Large states existed even before Asoka's reign, barbarian states that owed their great wealth and prosperity to the amaz-

ing expansion of foreign trade taking place at the time. We must not forget that three great Cultures were passing or about to pass into Civilization at approximately the same time (China, India and the Greco-Roman world) and that foreign trade was becoming an economic factor of paramount importance. This, perhaps, accounts for the fact that there was no question for northern Indians of conquering such powerful, if still barbarian, people. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to the court of Pāṭaliputra, mentioned the considerable power of the Pāndya state (modern Madura), and northern Indians knew about its two great rivals, Kerala (Malabar coast) and Chola (on the coast of Coromandel). All of them seem to have possessed important fleets bearing cotton goods all the way from the Red Sea to Malaya.

A generous nature, far more generous than it was in the Deccan, provided these southern states with many riches for which the rest of the world thirsted—pearls, corals, rice, pepper, ginger, cinnamon, ivory. As early as 450 B.C., rice and peacocks had been sent to Greece. And when Hippalus, an Alexandrian merchant, discovered the regular monsoons sometime after the birth of Christ, international trade acquired a character of massive regularity that revolutionized the economies of India, the Middle East and the Classical world of the Mediterranean. The famous drain on the finances of the Roman Empire was under way and southern India was the great beneficiary. From then on, the fabulous wealth of Tamil Land became a byword all over the known world: gold poured into South India in exchange for spices. Vast numbers of Roman coins have been found at Madura, and Roman colonies and mercenaries were numerous.

It is no wonder that at a time when northern India lapsed into cultural sterility, South India provided Indian Civilization with a remarkable cultural rebirth. The Indian Brāhmins who went to South India in the last centuries B.C. came too late to impose their Sanskrit language; there was already a strong independent Tamil literature common to the whole of South India. The center of Dravidian learning was Madura, and the golden age of Tamil literature coincided with the first three centuries A.D. Even in pre-Christian days, there were at least three *sangams* (academies of literature) adjudicating on new literary works. In many ways, Tamil has a greater and more fully developed literature than any other Indian vernacular. In the samples that have come down to us, one can

already discern a far different climate from that prevailing in the north, a warmer, more emotional outlook. Some Kural poems have, in fact, no equivalent in Sanskrit literature:

> Loveless natures, cold and hard,
> > Live for self alone.
> Hearts where love abides regard
> > Self as scarce their own . . .
>
> Where the body hath a soul,
> > Love hath gone before.
> Where no love infills the whole,
> > Dust it is—no more.
>
> How good are they who bear with scorn
> > And think not to return it!
> They're like the earth that giveth corn
> > To those who dig and burn it . . .[1]

South Indian religiosity was, at that time, far more emotional than northern India's Hinduism. The strong, vibrant faith of the Dravidians could not countenance the cold asceticism of the northerners, nor their life-negating outlook. Perhaps it was due to the influence of the Christian communities who had settled on the coast of Malabar in the first centuries A.D.; in any case, nothing in Sanskrit approaches the Christian concept of love as closely as the Tamil expression *anbu*. And nothing comes as close to the Christian concept of the Holy Ghost as Madhva's idea of Vāyu, the wind-god (in Syriac *rūaḥ* means all at once wind, breath and spirit). The concept of a god striving to express itself in its boundless love for men has never been expressed in India with the same passionate feelings as in the hymns of the early Tamil worshipers. The expression used the usual Hindu symbolism; but the emotions expressing themselves were truly Dravidian and eventually quickened to life the quiescent emotions of northern Indians too.

Although no northern Indian ruler ever attempted to conquer South India, the Indian Brāhmins were eventually able to impose upon the southerners their Civilization, complete with caste structure, laws, and religion—to which the Dravidians added their own cult of the Mother Goddess, matriarchy and polyandry. Local customs persisted all along, and some still do today. The caste system was introduced in its mature form, but with some variations from

the northern pattern: the Brāhmins asserted an unconditional ascendancy; Kṣatriyas and Vaisyas (social classes, not castes, let us remember) were almost nonexistent. Even today, there are only Brāhmins (hardly 3 per cent of the population of South India), and Sūdras divided into multitudes of occupational castes—and large numbers of outcastes (Parayan or Pariahs), descendants of the original native Tamils. Aryan blood was scarce in South India and the caste structure probably reflected this fact. There was, the Brāhmins apart, little *racial* difference between the various occupational castes, and the social pattern was largely imitative of the rest of India. Even today, anthropological studies based on physical measurements show that there is little racial difference between the southern Brāhmins and the other southern castes. South India adopted caste endogamy but with only little influx of Hindustani Brāhmin blood.[2] Local priests were on occasion admitted into the Brāhmin ranks, a few warlike tribes like the Rāzu were acknowledged as Kṣatriyas and the trading Komati became Vaisyas. But the distinguishing feature was the fantastic sharpness of social discrimination, unknown in the rest of India. The lower castes and outcastes were victims of the most outrageous discrimination on the part of the Brāhmins (who were probably not too sure of their own legitimacy and sought to compensate an inferiority complex). In modern times, a Kaniyan, for example, will pollute a Brāhmin if he comes within thirty-two feet of him. A Nāmbudiri Brāhmin of Kerala could be approached by a Nāyar but not touched by him; a Tiyan had to keep at a distance of 36 paces from him and a Pulayan could not come closer than 96 paces.[3] Even the Jains, who were fairly numerous and influential in the Deccan and the south at one time, adopted the same caste structure as the Hindus.

One after another, great dynasties arose in South India, only to disappear before newcomers: the Pallavas became powerful in the seventh century A.D., only to be replaced in the eleventh century by the even more powerful Cholas. As in northern India, the states were constantly changing in numbers, extent, form and size, continually at war with one another. South India was no more permanently united than the Deccan or North India. It is not therefore the political developments that offer any interest in South India. Instead of the tedious doings of princes and statesmen, it is to the cultural movement that one must turn. Sheltered from the great invasion pouring into northern India, the southerners proceeded to erect their

Moonlight Civilization, reflecting vigorously the northern sun of
earlier days. It is no accident that the two great thinkers who finally
summed up the great thoughts of Hinduism should have been south-
erners: Śankara, who summed up brilliantly the Advaita Vedānta,
came from the Malabar coast; and Rāmānuja lived in his youth at
Conjeevcram and taught at Kānchi, and it is in South India that
he came under the influence of the emotional Vaiṣṇavism. They
both reinterpreted the teachings of much older thinkers (Śankara
frequently insisted on his faithful rendering of older doctrines).'
There is little doubt, however, that the role of Śankara was actually
to destroy Buddhism by taking over its negative doctrine, and many
Hindu opponents actually accused him of being a Buddhist in dis-
guise. Not only on points of doctrine, but especially in the matter of
discipline and organization of the clergy, did he take over the Bud-
dhist methods and ideas, and thus made a telling contribution to the
revival of Hinduism all over India.

More generally, the influence of South India in stimulating the
theistic tendencies in Hinduism was considerable. It was largely in
South India that the struggle—a peaceful one—between Buddhism
and Hinduism took place, and it was only in South India that Hindu
culture still manifested some vitality. And since caste distinctions
were more outrageous in South India than elsewhere, it was there
also that theistic creeds (always implying, by their very nature, a
protest against great caste distinctions) flourished on the emotional
ground of *bhakti*. No wonder, then, that literally *all* noteworthy In-
dian thinkers between the seventh and thirteenth century came from
the south: in addition to the two greatest just mentioned, Madhva
(a dualist who proclaimed the godhead of Viṣṇu) came from South
Canara, Nimbārka (a dualist non-dualist Vaiṣṇava) was a Telugu
Brāhmin, and so was Vallabha, who flourished in the fifteenth cen-
tury.

Buddhism disappeared from India in the seventh and eighth cen-
turies A.D. The last Chinese pilgrims who came to India noticed with
sadness that, soon, it would be extinguished in the land of its birth.
It was largely thanks to South India's Moonlight influence that this
came about: Buddhist worship soon became indistinguishable from
the prevailing forms of Hinduism, Mahāyānism being only a sec-
tarian aspect of the great Vaiṣṇavism and Hīnayāna being absorbed
by the more ascetic Saivism. The metaphysics of Śankara's Advaita
Vedānta were those of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and soon, Gautama

Buddha himself was proclaimed to be an *avatār* of Visnu. About the tenth century, Buddhism had passed away in the Civilization that it had been so instrumental in founding.

Long before this, however, it had been discovered that South India was not the geographical end of the world, after all, and that beyond the southeastern seas, there were some extraordinary lands waiting to be discovered and civilized by Indians. When this happened, Southeast Asia made its entrance on the stage of history.

Just as in China, and about the same time, the area influenced by the great Indian Civilization had become immeasurably enlarged when the Moonlight Civilizations began to flourish. On the eve of the catastrophic Muslim invasions, Indian Civilization prevailed over an immense area stretching from Afghanistan to the Pacific, including most of what is known today as Southeast Asia. However, a gradual shift in the center of gravity of Indian Civilization had taken place—from west to east. Ever since the first Persian and then Greek inroads in the northwest, the specifically "Indian" character of Baluchistan, Afghanistan and the Indus Valley had tended to diminish. Then came the Yueh-chi invasions around the beginning of the Christian era, and a few hundred years later, the Huns. Slowly, gradually, the entire northwest area fell under the cultural influence of the rising Culture of the Middle East, mixed influences in which remnants of Hellenistic forms combined with Zoroastrian ideas and Buddhist notions. To orthodox Hindus, the northwest became an "unclean" area, polluted by repeated inroads of barbarian *mlechchas*.

Constantly retreating from the northwest, Indian Civilization was, however, constantly advancing toward the southeast, where it eventually collided, and then combined, with an advancing Chinese Civilization. In the course of time, several southeastern moons revolved around several suns (Indian, Chinese and Islamic), never creating an original culture but adapting external influences with remarkable skill and brilliance. This area includes a long string of islands running from Ceylon to the Philippines and modern New Guinea, as well as the Indo-Chinese Peninsula (modern Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaya). Except for Malaya, the Peninsula proper remained the home of yellow-skinned people, whereas the archipelago became the home of Malayans and Indonesians, and kindred people. To them belonged the Malayan Peninsula, the In-

donesian and Philippine islands, and even Formosa before the Chinese began to settle the coastal areas. Vast emigrations of Malayans toward Japan seem to have taken place in prehistorical times.

When history takes up the tale, large-scale migrations had almost ceased. Quite apart from the debilitating and oppressive influence of the tropical and equatorial climate, another factor contributed to limit and thwart any large-scale civilization in Southeast Asia: the broken-up, fragmentary character of the vast area parceled out among multitudes of islands or divided and subdivided by a great many impenetrable mountain ranges, a geopolitical factor that denied any extensive base on which a powerful civilization could be built. Swamps and dense jungle separated fertile valleys from one another, poor soil alternated with rich alluvial or volcanic soil and political units were compelled to remain relatively small. Restricted to their small islands or river valleys, the local potentates who ruled these diminutive states needed and constantly sought control of the only means of communication that could link the various parts of Southeast Asia together: the maritime routes. Sea power became essential to all these rulers who looked beyond their narrow territorial horizons. It was only much later, when the pressure of population became overwhelming, that fertile and relatively accessible lands stretching further inland began to be colonized by emigrating farmers. The settled populations increased in numbers, capital cities left the coasts and moved inland too. But even then, the sea remained by far the most important element in the political, social, economic and cultural life of Southeast Asians. This, of course, never was the case in India; the sea played no part in the building of Indian Culture and Civilization (no more than in contemporary China) and Indians had no organic relations with the ocean.

The brightest sun shining over Southeast Asia in the first centuries A.D. was Indian Civilization, and it was from the Deccan and South India, far removed from the decaying and devastated plains of northern India, that the most potent rays of this sun shone. The urge to expand, which characterizes all Civilizations at their zenith, gripped the Indians before the Birth of Christ, to reach the climax of its power about the fifth century A.D. Waves of Indian colonists, traders, soldiers, Brāhmins and Buddhist missionaries beat upon one Southeast Asian shore after another. Great military power based on superior technical knowledge, flourishing trade fostered by the remarkable increase in maritime exchanges between India and these

areas, the vast cultural superiority of the Indians, everything conspired to heighten the impact of Indian Civilization on the barbarian Southeast Asians. From the first to the ninth centuries A.D., from the zenith of Indian Civilization to its petrifaction, four great waves of colonization hit the southeast, every one of them organized by some powerful South Indian state.

Lack of historical records prevents us from drawing a complete picture of this vast movement. It seems clear that Ceylon and southern Burma were converted, or rather "civilized," by Asoka's Buddhist missionaries (although Burma seems to have been penetrated at a later date). Later, trade seems to have been the main colonizing agent: flourishing commerce had linked Gujarāt and the Malay Archipelago from a very early date, and an ancient Gujarāti proverb states that most Indians who went to Java never returned—preferring, undoubtedly, the soft climate and easy life of the distant new world to the precarious existence in an India torn by warfare and constantly overrun by foreign invasions. Passenger ships plied regularly between the Ganges, Ceylon and Malaya in the middle of the first millennium A.D. Indian settlers from Gujarāt and Kalīnga colonized Java, for instance, while others set out for Burma or Cambodia.

In between the major waves of organized colonization, individual settlements of Indians spread relentlessly, bringing the basic elements of Indian culture. Trade and travel often took the overland route, from Bengal through Burma down to Malaya and Cambodia, then down to the islands. But more often they took the maritime route, following the regular monsoon winds directly to Sumatra and Java, and points east. Old Indian books—the *Jātakas,* the *Kathāsaritsāgara,* and others—refer to these wondrous regions that set the imagination of civilized Indians on fire, to Suvarṇabhūmi, the fabulous "Land of Gold" as Southeast Asia was then known, where untold wealth of spices, minerals and timber enriched many of the Indians who went there. Since racial admixture between natives and Indians was carried out over a number of centuries, a great many elements of Indian Civilization entered quite naturally into the Southeast Asian blood stream and became an organic part of Southeast Asia. Between the second and the fifth centuries A.D., Indian kingdoms, ruled by Indians, were founded in Malaya, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo. On the whole, the Indianization of Southeast Asia proceeded peacefully. Local chiefs and petty

chieftains were admitted into the caste structure as Kṣatriyas through a ritual known as *vratyastoma,* performed by an Indian Brāhmin. Native names were then Sanskritized; constant intermarriage produced an Indianized ruling class; and all the elements of Indian culture flowed through these newly opened channels all over the Southeast. They learned the art of writing from the Indians, and all Southeast Asian scripts still used today (except of course for Arabic and Latin) sprang originally from Brāhmī. But such cultural influence was mostly confined to the social elite and the educated classes, while the bulk of the populations remained largely untouched.

As the general level of civilization began to rise in Southeast Asia, the multitudes of small states began to coalesce into larger units. Soon, very large empires took shape, much larger than any political unit existing in India at the time—and this in spite of less favorable geographical and climatic settings. The explanation of this phenomenon can only be found in the impact of Chinese Civilization. The cynical character of Indian political science does not seem to have been imported into Southeast Asia, and was replaced, instead, by the more ethical concept of the Chinese. The Chinese reality of the Universal Emperor and the Indian myth of the *cakravartin* combined to induce the Southeast Asians into materializing these ideals within the compass of huge maritime empires that astounded both the Chinese and the Indians. The colossal Sailendra Empire included all of modern Indonesia and Malaya, and we owe to the descriptions of admiring Arab seafarers a knowledge of the wealth, power and magnificence of this great state and of its ruler. The Sailendra Empire was a Buddhist state and was eventually replaced, in the thirteenth century—when India was overrun by Muslim invaders—by the Majapahit Empire of Java, a Hindu state. On the Indochinese mainland, other large states rose and fell: the Champā kingdom, whose glorious existence lasted from 150 A.D. to 1471 A.D., and the kingdom of Kāmboja, ruled by a remarkable series of great statesmen. Art flourished in Kāmboja as never before, centered around a capital city known to all Asia as Angkor the Magnificent, a city of more than a million inhabitants—which, when it was extricated from the jungle in modern times, contained not a single human being. Chinese and Indian envoys could hardly believe their eyes when they gazed at the splendid temple of Angkor Vat, a sublime work of art that was inspired by India but shaped by the genius of the

Khmer people. When Emperor Jayavarman VII built it, Indian Civilization had long since become petrified.

Indian inspiration provided the religion and the philosophy, the artistic forms and the technique with which Angkor was built, but the spirit embodied in the carved stone, the enigmatic "Angkor smile" of the great Cambodian face which dominates the great gate, conveys mutely the genius of the Khmers. Beyond this enigmatic face, imbued with a weird charm, lies the unearthly beauty of the Bayon Temple, where Jayavarman VII, first Buddhist ruler, transmuted the former cult of *devarājah* (divine consecration granted to Southeast Asian rulers but denied to Indians) into the new cult of *buddharājah*. And all over Southeast Asia tremendous ruins are strewn, testifying to the immense influence of Indian Civilization. Kumāraghosha, the Buddhist monk from Bengal who became the *guru* of the Sailendra ruler, was responsible for the building of the remarkable temple of Tārā. More impressive still are the immense ruins of Barabudur in Java, where Buddhist and Hindu artistic forms mingle in deep harmony. Side by side, the life history of Gautama Buddha carved delicately in stone continues the bas-reliefs depicting the legendary tales of Kṛiṣṇa, Viṣṇu and Rāma. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, ruins are still waiting to be unearthed by the insatiable curiosity of modern man. But enough has already been extracted from the pitilessly voracious jungle to indicate that brilliant Moonlight Civilizations glittered in all their magnificence, reflecting Indian Civilization at a time when it had been dealt a crippling blow at home, in India.

Everywhere, Indian influence prevailed over the Chinese, and for evident reasons: an undoubted cultural superiority owing to much greater philosophic and religious insight (China itself fell under the spell of Buddhism), and also to a far more flexible script. Furthermore, Indian Civilization respected the political autonomy of its colonies and the cultural freedom of all its units, and, on the whole, worked through peaceful penetration. The Chinese, on the other hand, proceeded by conquest, assimilation and absorption into the all-encompassing Chinese Civilization—the "only" Civilization in the eyes of the arrogant Sons of Han. Except for the Vietnamese, and then only for a while, Southeast Asians wanted no part of this Chinese Civilization and turned wholly toward the Indian sun.

Soon enough, the triumphant march of Islam through India swept on to Southeast Asia and took over most of the maritime Malayan

part of it. But it failed to take hold on the Indochinese mainland, north of the Isthmus of Kra. The impact of India left its indelible stamp, in religion and in art, on Ceylon and the Indochinese mainland. Their ways of life were, and still are, decisively shaped by Hīnayāna Buddhism. Although Mahāyāna had wielded great influence in former days, the more severe and desiccated Hīnayāna triumphed in the end because it remained closer to Gautama's true mood—the twilight mood of exhaustion from the multiplicity of creation, the nihilistic attitude of those who seek to put an end to life and suffering and hanker after the utter void of nothingness (*śūnya*). The dynamic vigor of Mahāyāna could not accommodate itself to the hothouse atmosphere of Southeast Asia, where the boundless richness of nature destroys purposive effort and where man loses all will power, all desire to strive and attain the unattainable, all desire to shape and create. What he does create is the result of uncontrollable instincts within him that manifest themselves, in artistic form, as vegetative growths sprouting up with all the disorderly vitality of the jungle—yet always impersonal and impermanent.

Consciousness of the "I" disappears in an atmosphere of superabundance, where nature does everything essential and where man's efforts cannot but appear trivial in comparison. Whereas further north, in cold and temperate climates, man must ceaselessly exert himself to dominate nature in order to survive, and derives a compensating strength from his very striving, the tropics instill into him an increasing disregard for these fantastic processes of nature that come as a matter of course. The whole of nature becomes an illusion that must be dispelled. The Hīnayānist therefore longs to escape from a particularized existence that can never have the metaphysical meaning it has in the more northern climes. The dreamy longing of northern man has no place here, where the distance between longing and fulfillment is almost nil. Man's soul has no real possibility of development, and *experience*, the only true teacher, can hardly take place at all. Man becomes a vegetable, a creature of the botanical world. Nihilism replaces the naturalism or romanticism of the north; disgust with creation fosters the negative aspect of an empty *nirvāṇa* which man longs for with gentle but fervent expectancy.

Hīnayāna, or, as its devotees prefer to call it, Theravāda, is essentially the Buddhism of the damp, stifling tropics. Its desiccated aridity which repels men from the temperate or cold north is precisely what makes it attractive to a weary tropical man; it is soothing and

cooling, and infinitely reassuring. From a universal standpoint, however, Hīnayāna is the religion of mediocrity, uninspiring, nonidealistic, a creed that stimulates no progress whatsoever, individual or collective, a purely negative creed. What *historical* lassitude had temporarily produced much further north in the Indo-Gangetic plains, the warm humidity of tropical *nature* has petrified into a lasting doctrine in Southeast Asia.

Dry and arid, Theravāda Buddhism had to accommodate itself, nevertheless, to the worshiping mood of the local populations, to the eternal yearning of man for consolation and reassurance. Having failed to develop any profound and comprehensive philosophy and weld it, as Mahāyāna had, to an emotional religion, Hīnayāna had to tolerate many forms of corruption of its doctrine and many forms of superstitions that have finally made it appear far more decadent than its northern counterpart. But what else to expect when the supreme ideal of the Theravādin is not that of the altruistic and generous Bodhisattva, but that of the selfish *arhat* who seeks and reaches salvation for himself alone, and is useless to others? The result was that Gautama Buddha came to be worshiped as a god, surrounded by innumerable deities imported from the capacious Hindu pantheon; this was tolerated by the *arhats* because of their understanding of the unreal nature of all manifestations.

To a great extent, also, Theravāda Buddhism owed its persistent existence, in Ceylon and Burma especially, to a *nationalistic* reaction against the inevitable, almost biological pressure of an overpowering neighbor. The octopus-like Hinduism of India's vast populations would otherwise swallow up and destroy the separate identity of Ceylonese and Burmese, to whom Buddhism is the safest guarantee of separate existence (very much like the Roman Catholicism of Poland or Ireland, for instance). Hinduized Tamil invaders had, at one time, sought to suppress Ceylonese Buddhism, but the local population was determined to preserve a creed that was dying a natural death on the Indian mainland.

In Theravāda Buddhism, the sun of India truly sets. Around the tenth century A.D., Indian Civilization, rejuvenated by the Moonlight Civilizations that reflected it in the south and the southeast, is about to expire. A new, more vigorous Civilization is standing on its northwestern doorstep, ready to take it all over.

X

Moonlight Civilization in India: Islam and the Moghuls

UNTIL about the tenth century, India and Indians were left alone, free to enjoy their Civilization more or less undisturbed. Nothing of historical importance had happened, and all invaders, Greeks, Persians, Yueh-chis, and Huns, had been absorbed and digested, and had entirely disappeared as separate entities. Yet, it was a strange fact that, long before the birth of Christ, the Indus Valley, birthplace of Indian Culture, had become an impure land. Along with the Punjab beyond the Sutlej, this holy land of the Vedas had been repeatedly overrun by barbarians and had become unholy, soiled ground for all orthodox Brāhmins, totally unfit for their permanent residence. Subsequent invasions did not improve matters. From then on, Hindu India proper started east of the Sutlej and the Sarasvatī rivers, leaving out of the Indian perimeter Afghanistan (White India), Baluchistan, Sind and the western Punjab (roughly the area covered by modern Western Pakistan). When, in the seventh century, Islam and the Arabs invaded that area and took it over, they were, in point of fact, not making inroads into India at all. Yet this was no invasion like the others, but a warning of much more important events to come. But Indians lived on, unconcerned.

What had really happened was that a new Culture had been developing in the Middle East, a new Culture whose distant roots lay in the visions of Zoroaster and the Hebrew prophets, a Culture that started to bloom about the time of Christ, grew through its "medieval" period and, contrary to most other Cultures, reached its decisive watershed, not when it passed into Civilization, but four hundred years before, at the time of its Protestant Reformation: at

the time when the Islamic Reformation took over almost all of the area, inherited half of the Mediterranean basin, most of the Byzantine Empire and all of Persia and Persian-influenced lands—at the time when the Arabs founded their great empire. For the first time in history, but largely unnoticed by the Indians, the area of Sind and the western Punjab became part of the same cultural structure as North Africa and southern Spain.

Time passed, also unnoticed by the uninterested Indians, and about the eleventh century A.D. Muslim Culture metamorphosed itself into Islamic Civilization. For four hundred years, the Arabs had lived relatively peacefully in Sind and had traded further down the coast of Malabar. But all over the Muslim world, the Arabs were soon superseded by the tough "Romans" of Islam, the dour, uncultured Turks of Central Asia. Muslim imperialism in India proper started when the Turks stepped on the scene of history, not before. There were, of course, a few premonitory clashes between Indian rulers and the Turko-Afghans; in 986, the ambitious Āmir of Ghaznī, Sabuktigīn (a descendant of Central Asian slaves), carried out the first raid into India and crushed the nearest Hindu ruler, Rājah Jaipāl of Bathindah. Skirmishes followed in the northwest for a number of years between Sabuktigīn's famous son Mahmūd of Ghaznī and a shaky coalition of Hindu rulers; the Muslims devastated the areas that fell under their control and instilled terror in the hearts of the Hindus; but nothing decisive was yet accomplished: those were merely plundering raids without lasting consequences—except insofar as they weakened Hindu resistance in the northwest, the traditional gate to India.

One of the most remarkable episodes of this time was the journey and long sojourn in India of one of Islam's greatest intellects, Albērūnī, forever known as the Master. A philosopher, mathematician and astronomer of great repute, he came originally from Khwārizm (Khiva, in modern Turkestan) and accompanied Mahmūd of Ghaznī down into the Punjab. Having settled there, he proceeded to make a thorough study of Sanskrit and of Hindu literature, and has left us a penetrating description of India in his famous work, *Tahkik-i-Hind (An Enquiry into India)*.[1] In this brilliant and yet scholarly study of India in the eleventh century, we have a mine of information about the country and its people on the eve of the great Muslim invasions. Gripped by an irresistible impulse to discover truth for its own sake, Albērūnī was not content with merely describing

India as he found it, but philosophized at great length about India's relations with the powers of the Middle East throughout the ages.

What appears to have struck Albērūnī most forcibly is the extreme xenophobia of the Hindus, their exclusiveness and hatred for all *mlechchas,* all "barbarians." In some penetrating passages, he attributes this hostility (never mentioned by his predecessors, Greeks in the last centuries B.C., and Chinese in the early centuries A.D.) to the bitter rivalry between Mahāyāna Buddhism and Zoroastrianism in Northwest India. In his eloquent pages, one can feel the hostile clash between two alien societies, between an aging Hindu-Buddhist Civilization and a young Middle Eastern Culture; and he goes on to say that the advent of Islam only intensified this hostility. The inroads of the Arabs, four centuries before his time, are blamed for a good deal of this feeling, especially the raids of Muhammad bin Kāsim, who conquered Sind in the eighth century A.D. Yet it is clear that for centuries afterward the Hindus did not trouble themselves overmuch about events taking place west of the Hakrā river, historical boundary between Sind and Hind. For all practical purposes, the area occupied by the Arabs remained unholy ground to the Hindus, and India proper went on living unconcerned. It is only in the days of Mahmūd of Ghaznī and Albērūnī himself that this Hindu hostility began to acquire the pitch of virulence which he ascribes to it.

Albērūnī's work has been described as "a magic island of quiet impartial research in the midst of a world of clashing swords, burning towns, and plundered temples";[2] it is certainly that, and much more besides. Quite apart from its immense scholarship and scientific erudition, it is a masterpiece of psychological analysis and a precious clue to the enduring characteristics of the Indian soul. Among many other things, Albērūnī singled out the Hindus' pride in their civilization and contempt for all things alien to Hinduism, their reluctance to communicate their culture and knowledge to foreigners; he marveled at their religious tolerance and lack of theological disputations among *paṇḍits,* and referred with a certain contempt to their unwillingness to stake their lives for their ideals. And time and again, he describes their fanatical hostility toward all *mlechchas.* His description of the caste system as it was in operation at the time is masterly and proves conclusively that it had already reached the stage of absolute rigidity for which it became known centuries later.

It must have been clear to any ambitious Muslim ruler who took

the trouble of studying Albērūnī's masterpiece that India was ripe for the plucking.

By now, the Hindus knew that they were dealing no longer with the relatively peaceful and cultured Arabs but with the dreaded, cruel *Turuṣkas,* or Turks, the Muslim "Romans" who were in the process of taking over the Muslim world and were going to extend their dominions, in centuries to come, all over India and well into the heart of Europe. The days of the old Hindu kingdoms were numbered, and their downfall was postponed only because of internecine quarrels among Afghan Turks. Rulership in the Muslim world had by now become as unstable as among the Indians and had entered the Caesarian phase of the *Imarat al-Istila,* the "Amirate by seizure"; its Caesarian character was such that only strong rulers were tolerated, and leadership was brutally snatched from the hands of those who were not resolute and ruthless enough. This was evidenced when the dynasty of Ghaznī eventually fell on evil days and gave way to the far more redoubtable dynasty of Ghūr. Inter-Muslim rivalries postponed the inevitable invasion of India until 1175, and then for a few years it was only a matter of absorbing other Muslim states where the last descendants of the Ghaznavids still ruled (western Punjab). The decisive year was 1192: on the battlefield of Tarāin, the historic ground of Kurukṣetra of *Bhagavad Gītā* fame, Muhammad of Ghūr destroyed the colossal army of the Rājput king Prithvirāj, and opened the floodgates to the Muslim invaders of India.

From then on, Indian history is a tale of steady Muslim progress at the expense of the steadily weakening Indian states. Afflicted by a debilitating pacificism, corroded by the idea of non-violence (*ahiṁsā*), the Indians left it to the Kṣatriya professional soldiers to fight the invaders; the rest of the Indian people lifted not one finger to defend their homeland. They were dealing with exceedingly warlike men, Central Asian brutes who thirsted for the tremendous wealth accumulated by many centuries of relatively peaceful Indian Civilization. And so, one after the other, the northern Indian states let themselves be raped by the conquering Turks, submitting to loot and wholesale destruction of the most precious relics of their great Civilization, with an almost indifferent fatalism. The Muslim ruler who actually carried out most of the conquest was a former slave from Turkestān, the famous Qutb-ud-dīn Aibak who succeeded his master Muhammad of Ghūr (who had originally purchased him from the

estate of the Qāzī of Nīshāpūr), and founded what came to be known as the "Slave Dynasty"—slave-rulership being one of the strange forms which Caesarism took in the Islamic world. His successor, the former slave Iltutmish (of the Turkestāni tribe Ilbarī), became first Sultān of Delhi, extended his dominions to all of northern India including Bengal, and died in 1236. The Slave Dynasty came to an end about the end of the thirteenth century, to be replaced by the Turko-Afghan Khaljīs, who expanded southward and had to ward off the dreaded Mongols who were then in the process of overrunning the entire civilized world, from China to the Middle East and Central Europe. Early in the fourteenth century, 'Alā-ud-dīn crossed the Vindhyas into the Deccan and started the conquest of the peninsula. As had been the case further north, the Hindu states proved unable to unite against the foreign invaders, and often used the opportunity of Muslim attacks on one of them to strike it in the back: while Ramchandradeva of Devagiri was being hard pressed by a strong attack of 'Alā-ud-dīn, he was attacked by the Hoysala ruler, a fellow Hindu king. And so, practically the whole of India eventually fell under the sway of the Turko-Afghan rulers.

The only strong resistance that was offered to the invading Muslims came from the proud Rājputs—who were, in fact, the descendants of the invading Huns of earlier days. Soon enough, Hindu India knuckled under for good to the Muslims, though pockets of resistance remained—in the extreme south, in Orissa and parts of Gujarāt. Strongly Persianized themselves, the invading Turks favored the introduction of Persian culture into India; and whereas the strongly Semitic outlook of the Arabs had not made a dent in the cultural defenses of the Hindus, the more catholic and delicate Aryan outlook of Persian Islam influenced many leading Hindus profoundly. And, in return, India's influence on the invaders became extremely powerful. The ruling Muslims began to shake themselves free of the control of the Islamic Doctors of the Law (*'Ulamā*). 'Alā-ud-dīn was bold enough to state that on all political matters he would decide alone, without ecclesiastical advice. The beginning of an Indo-Muslim spirit was taking shape.

Yet, from those days dates the very special ethos that characterizes the Hindus' attitude toward the feared yet despised *mlechchas*. Taken over politically and militarily by a completely alien civilization, the Hindus withdrew into a psychological ivory tower, leaving the substance of this world's power and riches to the alien, "impure"

barbarians. Nowhere can this new attitude of a materially defeated civilization be studied as well as in the famous epic to the great hero of Hindu resistance, Prithīrāj the Chauhān, who struggled fiercely against Muhammad of Ghūr and eventually found death on the battlefield of Tarāin.[3] In this epic, the *Chand Rāisā*, written in archaic Hindi, all the self-pity that began to characterize the Hindu outlook from then on wells up dramatically. Ceaseless lamentations over the barbarous depredations of the Muslims are intermingled with references to the mythological age of decline (the *Kālī Yuga*) during which the decadence of Hinduism (the only true civilization in the eyes of Hindus) had become inevitable. There are even complaints against Buddhism and its soul-destroying doctrine of nonviolence (*ahiṁsā*). For centuries thereafter, generation after generation of Hindus wept as they heard the pitiful tale of the Muslim conquests—and then, drying their tears, for the most part went to work for their Muslim overlords.

From then on, Hindu civilization survived only at the cost of its pride. Already rigid long before the Muslims came in, the caste system evolved new sets of rules and tightened the existing ones to the limit, in order to keep the despised *mlechchas* at bay; intermarriage and commensality were strictly prohibited; an implacable social ostracism struck all those who did not comply. Hindus were allowed to work for the alien rulers but barred the entrance to their homes to them. Contact with non-Hindus had to be followed by all manner of purification. Gradually, the ethos of a subjugated Hindu nationalism took shape: Hindus, for the most part, led double lives more or less unconnected with one another. They were at the service of any non-Hindu who was powerful enough to compel them, but never granted him their emotional allegiance: they acted as they were expected to, but there was no emotional commitment behind their actions: this was a perverted interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*'s teaching. They enjoyed whatever worldly bounties were available to them while professing to despise them. They hated their overlords for their power, then despised them when the wheel of historical fortune eventually made them weak. Hinduism, as a world-outlook, gradually acquired certain characteristics that were absent before the advent of the Muslim invaders: hypocrisy and self-pity. The best Hindus forsook a life of action and sought refuge in mysticism; and the best among the best sought some form of mystical union with Islam's alien creed, some workable synthesis, even though they were

cursed by all orthodox Hindus: such men as the famous Tāgores belonged to a group of Bengali Brāhmins who had been thrown outside the pale of Hindu orthodoxy for having come too close to Islam.

The body of Hinduism was now prostrate at the feet of the Muslim conquerors; but its soul, crippled though it was, remained out of reach. Hinduism could not absorb the Muslims as it had all preceding invaders; but neither would the Muslims be capable of destroying the soul of Hinduism.

A period of uncertainty followed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Delhi Sultānate collapsed, not so much because of a spasmodic Hindu resistance as of inter-Muslim quarrels. Independent Muslim states arose and, in the true Hindu style of political plurality, political chaos began to affect Islamic India. A remarkable Hindu revival took place in the southern empire of Vijayanagar and stood for a long time as a bulwark of Hindu culture and independence; but united or not, the Indo-Muslims were strong enough to destroy it. In 1565, the allied Deccan Sultāns crushed forever the last great Hindu state in the south; and following the disastrous battle of Talikota, the Muslims destroyed the magnificent city of Vijayanagar, one of the most remarkable Hindu cities that ever existed.

Weakened by their long stay in India, the Turko-Afghans had lost all sense of historic mission and all feeling for statesmanship. Had there been no interference from outside, it is possible that a Hindu revival would have swept them out or absorbed them. But Central Asia remained a steady fountainhead of Muslim strength and energy, and a new wave of Turkish violence hurled itself into India again—fighting no longer the old Hindu states, but the large crop of Muslim Sultānates that had replaced them. A great leader emerged among the Chaghātai Turks by the name of Bābur, a descendant of Timur and Genghis Khan, the two great scourges of Asia. Seizing the opportunities as they offered themselves, he used with great skill the internecine quarrels of the Muslims in India, defeated Ibrāhīm Lodī in 1526 and put an end to the nominal Delhi Sultānate; on March 16, 1527, he crushed the Rājput forces on the battlefield of Khānua. He then turned once more against the Turko-Afghans and crushed them at the junction of the Ganges and Gogrā rivers—and thus laid the foundations of the Moghul Empire, one of the greatest and most brilliant empires known to history.

With Bābur and his successors, Persian language and culture flooded India and became the official language and form of expression of the new Indo-Muslim Civilization. A struggle for power between Bābur's successor Humāyūn and the Turko-Afghan Sher Shāh was only an interruption in the steady progress of the Moghuls; and with Akbar the Great the Empire reached not only the zenith of its power and splendor, but also one of the peaks of wise and generous imperialism known to history. Akbar was a great conqueror, but an idealistic one. Completing the work started by Bābur, he tightened his control over northern India, made allies out of the Rājputs, and, haunted by the dream of an All-India Empire, marched on the four Sultānates of the Deccan and incorporated the peninsula in his empire.

Moghul Civilization started in a dilemma and ended in the same unresolved dilemma: should it remain purely Muslim or should it be a synthesis of Islam and Hinduism? Should it remain true to the conquering Civilization or attempt to blend conqueror and conquered? Swerving from one extreme to the other according to the personal whims of the various emperors, it was never able to make up its mind and failed to lay down one consistent, long-term policy. Certainly the most remarkable phase, and the phase that made Akbar into a world-historical figure of the first order, was the attempted synthesis.

Under Akbar, the Moghul Empire recovered almost all of India. Its wealth and power were incalculable, its organization so remarkable that the British took it over later on and continued its institutions for many generations. But Akbar's fame really rests on his attempts to blend Muslim and Hindu civilizations, perhaps the most completely different civilizations ever known to history. The vague hope of success that attended this remarkable attempt lay in the Persian component of Muslim Civilization, an "Aryan," as opposed to the Arab-Semitic, component that was always more open to Hindu influences than the rigid monotheism and transcendentalism of the Arabs. To the Arab legalism and transcendentalism, the Persians had always opposed the Sūfī mysticism, with its immanentism and the traditional adaptability of mysticism to all forms of religion. Open-minded in the extreme, Akbar's urge to synthesize the two alien cultures owed as much to his genuine bent for metaphysics as to his imperialistic desire to consolidate his political power. Greatly impressed by the nobility, devotion and profound intellectual quali-

ties of the Hindus who served in increasing numbers under him, Akbar dreamed of a new united civilization that would be neither Islamic nor Hindu but Neo-Indian. And in this bold undertaking, Sūfism was bound to play a leading part.

He was a "child of his century" and the best representative of the generous spirit of the times. He started by making a thorough investigation of his own faith and observed the external forms of Muslim orthodoxy until 1575, when a great change of heart came over him. He then built, at Fathpur-Sīkrī, the famous House of Worship (*'Ibādat-Khāna*) and summoned learned men from all religions—starting with Muslim divines, who soon tired him with their petty wranglings, then Hindu sages such as Devī, Purushottama and many others, Jain teachers, Zoroastrian Parsī priests and Jesuit missionaries from Goa. Unconverted to any of these specific creeds, but strongly impressed by all of them, he finally took the bold step of promulgating his own synthetic creed, the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī*, a strange compound of all the religions known to him, unhappily blended and unsatisfying to all except himself. He incurred, of course, the rabid enmity of the *'Ulamās* and made no dent in the protoplasmic body of Hinduism. But his very un-Muslim ideal of universal toleration (*sulh-i-kul*) was noble and fully applied to all creeds—except the Muslims themselves.

Faithful to his strong belief that every "human being gives a name to the Supreme Being but, in truth, it is useless to give a name to the unknowable," he gave up Islam's fundamental tenet: "There is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet," and substituted: "There is one God and Akbar is his representative on earth." All the available Sanskrit works of importance were translated into Persian under the technical direction of Faizi, the most famous poet of the time. And the same was done, vice versa, from Persian into the vernacular tongues of India, putting an immense amount of Islamic literature at the disposal of the Hindus.

Akbar's life-work failed, as all such attempts are bound to fail, because it was not so much a profound, living synthesis proceeding from genuine organic growth and actually *lived*, as a purely intellectual syncretism, a mechanical addition and subtraction of elements drawn from various conflicting philosophies and religious creeds. He invented a ritual borrowed from the Zoroastrian Parsīs, combined it with his syncretic pantheism of Sūfī origin and put into this grab bag various elements borrowed from right and left. Syn-

thesis was a reality in those days, but it could not be brought about by simple legislation, even by a powerful monarch.

Kabīr, a famous Muslim, was a disciple of the great Hindu saint Rāmānanda and spent his life trying to reconcile Islam and Hinduism. His Sūfīsm helped him understand Hindu mysticism, and he made no bones about the fact that, to him, "Hindu and Turk were pots of the same clay: Allah and Rāma were but different names."[*] He did not believe in ritual or liturgy, or any of the external forms of religion. His only teaching was *bhajan,* devotional worship, another name for the Hindu *bhakti.* On the basis of *mysticism,* all religions can be reconciled, since it is by essence tolerant of all differences of interpretation—because it sees through them all and allows them to live side by side. However, on the basis of *prophetism,* things are quite different: religions become dynamic, intolerant, conscious of history, eager to shape the world rather than escape from it. It was no wonder, therefore, that when another great thinker of the time, Nānak, attempted a reconciliation on the basis of the vague monotheistic tendencies of the *Upaniṣads,* the result should be quite the reverse of what he might have thought. Instead of putting an end to the conflict of religions, he made it worse by creating a new religion, far more dynamic than either, and more warlike. Nānak had unwittingly founded Sikhism, a mixture of Islam and Hinduism, a dynamic creed that was far more prophetic than mystical, and ended up by entering into a headlong conflict with the Moghul authorities—and eventually became far more rabidly anti-Muslim than Hinduism itself—a violent antagonism that still persists today.

Whatever the outcome may have been, these efforts toward synthesis shook Hinduism. Orthodox scholars still wrote in Sanskrit, but all reformers wrote in vernacular languages and influenced directly the masses of non-Brāhmins. Rāmānanda and Kabīr both wrote and preached in Hindī, and Kabīr's contribution, especially, enriched Hindī literature; Nāmadeva's contribution to the development of Marāthī literature was considerable; many Vaiṣṇava teachers and poets such as Chandīdās shaped Bengali lyricism; and reformers like Nānak and his disciples did wonders for Punjābī. Even the local Muslim rulers or governors encouraged this development of vernaculars, being unfamiliar with Sanskrit, yet being sufficiently Indianized to speak fluently the local vernaculars; the Muslim rulers of Bengal prompted scholars to translate the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* from Sanskrit into Bengali. Of course, such Hindu rulers as the kings

of Vijayanagar encouraged their local literature—but in Telugu, not Sanskrit. The latter literature was not ignored, but it was definitely overshadowed by the tremendous development of vernacular literatures—and, consequently, of the fissiparous tendencies in India.

Synthesis between Islam and Hinduism was not confined to religious attempts—all of which failed in the end. There was also a literary synthesis. Persian influence became predominant in India, even before the Moghuls; but it was a specifically Persian, rather than Arab-Muslim influence; it was the impact of a land in perpetual cultural development. Persian poetry had flourished in the great days of Islamic Culture with Firdausi and Saadi, but did not come to an end when Islamic Civilization petrified. Jalāl-ud-dīn Rūmī and Hafiz perpetuated the incomparable traditions of Persian poetry well into the fifteenth century, and the greatest wonders of Persian architecture were yet to be erected. It was only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, under the Safavīd dynasty, that it reached the zenith of its greatness in structural forms and subtle decorative art— witness the ethereal marvels that still dot the Safavīd capital at Ispahan and the cities of Qum, Shiraz and Meshed. But then, Persia itself was really part of this Islamic rejuvenation that was prompted by the conquest of India and Islam's Moonlight Civilization in India. The greatest architectural, political and even religious expression of the Persian soul unfolded not in Persia itself, but in India, where a strange triangular combination welded India's immense setting (and also cultural stimulus), the spirit of Persian culture and the strong arm of Islam's Turkish conquerors.

Even in Turko-Afghan days, Delhi had already become an intellectual rival of the famous Muslim center of Bukhārā, in Central Asia. Persian scholars and artists flocked to India under the pressure of the Mongol invasions; many institutions were established for them; Persian names, Persian architecture, Persian miniature painting, Persian poetry were to be found all over northern India. Persian cities were built, and many names of modern Indian cities are more reminiscent of Persia than Hindustan: Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Mirzapur, Allahabad, and so on. The growing Persianization of India went apace with the progress of the Islamic faith, spreading all over India in haphazard patches so that, a few centuries later, the religious map of India looked like a fantastic quilt. Interpenetration of Islamic and Indian cultures increased under the Moghuls. Such a man as Dārā Shukoh was one of the greatest scholars ever produced

by India; a prince and member of the Imperial Moghul family, well versed in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, he wrote many famous books, including a Persian translation of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and extremely valuable works on Sūfīsm.

To foreigners, the most striking aspect of this Moonlight Civilization lies in its architecture and plastic arts. Except for the puritanical Aurangzeb, all Moghul Emperors were great builders and patrons of the arts. The intermingling of Muslim Persian and local Indian styles is so complete and perfect that Indo-Muslim art must be viewed as an organic whole, a remarkable example of cross-fertilization of two great cultural units, expressing a harmonious spirit in such architectural marvels as the Tāj Mahal, Jodh Bāi's palace at Fathpur Sīkrī, Āgra's Pearl Mosque (Moti Masjid), Delhi's Red Fort, Humāyūn's tomb in Delhi and so on, all of which well deserve such famous epithets "romance in stone" or "jewelry on a colossal scale." The inherent puritanism of Semitic Islam had long ago disappeared in Persia, where the Muslim injunction against the portrayal of living forms had been steadily disregarded; thus miniature painting was free to develop in India to its utmost, in spite of the objections of orthodox Muslims and, as Abul Fazl claimed, "Bigoted followers of the letter of the law are hostile to the art of painting, but their eyes now see the truth."[5] From the early Turko-Afghan Sultāns of Delhi to the Moghul Emperors, one great, continuous cultural movement was able to merge harmoniously two great, and quite different, cultural traditions on a scale never equaled anywhere else, at any time. As all things do, however, it had to come to an end. And, from the days of Emperor Aurangzeb onward, the end was in sight.

A last word should be added about the introduction of a new intellectual discipline that was always lacking in Hindu India: the study of history. For the first time on Indian soil, history became a living reality, a worthy object of study and interest. From the days when Minhāj-ud-dīn wrote his *Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī*, a famous history of the Islamic world, the science of history flourished in Muslim India. Then followed the historical works of Amīr Khusrav, Ziā-ud-dīn Barnī and countless others whose volumes are still used as precious reference material today. If Hindu India had no sense of time, Islam, the heir to all the prophetic insights of the Middle East, had a strong one. There is, however, little evidence that the Hindus were greatly influenced by this new time-consciousness of their Muslim

conquerors, and they had to wait for the impact of another Culture (Europe's) before becoming at least slightly historically minded.

Akbar's successors turned the compass around and Islam came back in the full strength of its rigid orthodoxy. Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān ruled sternly according to Islamic tenets, but in the full and crushing splendor of the most brilliant courts of their times. For all their orthodoxy it was in their days that Moghul art reached its zenith, the "soul of Iran incarnate in the body of India," in countless mausoleums, mosques, palaces, gates, pavilions, many of which rank as the most precious artistic gems in the world. The familiar imprint of Persian architectural forms—the slender minarets, the graceful domes and cupolas, the ogive gateways and vaults, the familiar *ivans*—all these forms merged gracefully with the original Indian contributions: the delicate carvings of pierced marble screens, the exquisite window tracery, the magnificent gardens surrounding some architectural jewel, everything was faintly reminiscent of the defunct glory of Baghdad or Granada—but only faintly. It was all on a gigantic scale; Indian influence was noticeable in the lack of moderation and sobriety, the accumulation of incalculable wealth, the fabulous lavishness of the bejeweled thrones and in the general luxuriousness of a life that was far more reminiscent of the Maurya or Gupta atmosphere than of any that was known to the sterner Arab world.

In spite of the stiffening of the Islamic domination and of the specifically Muslim element, the impact of the new religion on India was considerable. India was vulnerable to any new philosophy of life that would do away with the fantastically unjust social structure imposed by the caste system. India's tragedy was that Civilization's permanent ossification had come too soon, that large populations of aboriginals and outcastes still remained outside the fold of Hindu society; they were, of course, an ideal field for Muslim proselytism. The military conquests of the Islamic Turks were often ruthless and bloody, but the democratic appeal of the Muslim faith became irresistible in many parts of India. The Islamic creed took over completely the northwest area previously delineated (modern West Pakistan), and in many large pockets, as far east as Bengal, and far south in the Deccan and on the coasts. Islam was able to draw to its democratic doctrine an increasing number of outcastes, unabsorbed

fragments of humanity living on the outskirts of a closed Hindu society.

It should not be presumed, however, that the ruling invaders had any intention of pushing Islam's social democracy too far. The distinction between Muslim conqueror and latter-day Muslims who descended from the conquered, was sharp and remained so. The Muslims recognized two broad social classes: the aristocratic *Ashráf*, descendants of the conquerors (Pathāns, Afghans, Turks and Persians) and of high-caste Hindu converts, and the great masses of *Ajláf*, the common people converted after the conquest. Intermarriage between the two groups was always frowned upon and even today one can see the considerable physical differences between their respective members. In addition, it should not be assumed, either, that Muslim democracy was insensitive to the prevailing caste structure. In northern India, conversion to Islam did not always affect a man's caste status; and many castes or groups (Rājput, Gujar, Jāt) became, and are, divided into two sections, one Hindu and the other Muslim. Many Muslim functional castes came into being (Jolāhā, or weaver; Khulu, oil pressers; Dhunia, cotton carders; etc.), ruled as rigidly as any Hindu caste by their *panchāyats*. Indian Muslims have been profoundly influenced by their homeland's ancient social pattern, and remain, to this day, far more particular about their matrimonial alliances than are their coreligionists anywhere else in the Islamic world.

The steady progress of Islam in India was probably fatal to the Moghul Empire; Aurangzeb, the last great emperor—*'Álamgir* (Conqueror of the World), *Pādshāh* (Emperor) and *Ghazi* (Holy Warrior)—attempted a full-scale retreat from the conciliatory policy of his predecessors and wrecked the empire in the process. Stern and austere, fanatically convinced that Islam was the only true faith, he forgot that the Moghul Empire was, in fact, just as much Hindu as Muslim. He forgot that if Akbar had not made friends with the powerful Rājputs and had not enlisted the services of countless Hindus, the empire would never have survived his reign. He was determined to make it a strictly Muslim empire and promulgated a whole string of laws which antagonized the Hindus and resulted in a series of revolts—mild at first (the Jāts, the Bundelās and the Satnāmis), more serious when the first headlong clash between the Moghuls and the Sikhs occurred in 1675. The sect founded by Nānak

had prospered and grown in power and influence, and the execution
of their leader Guru Teg Bahādur by the Moghul emperor, far from
destroying them, stiffened their resistance to Islam and made them
into a state within the state. Guru Govind, their great lawgiver, built
up their religious and political, and especially military, apparatus,
and made them into one of the main centers of strength in the
Punjab.

The worst error of Aurangzeb was to antagonize the warlike Rāj-
puts, the main Hindu support of the Empire, and alienate them to
such an extent that they supported his rebellious son Prince Akbar
in the hope of putting "a truly national ruler on the throne of
Delhi"[6]—a hopeless undertaking which Aurangzeb crushed. And
the next worst error was to weaken the Deccan Sultānates and indi-
rectly promote the rise of a new Hindu power, the Marātha confed-
eracy. The appearance of this new factor in Indian politics, very
much like the appearance of the Vijayanagar Empire between the
Delhi Sultānate and the Moghul Empire, implied a rebirth of Hindu
power and sentiment stimulated by inter-Muslim quarrels. The land
of the Marāthas, rugged and hilly, difficult to conquer, was a favor-
able breeding ground for a warlike race. A steady religious awaken-
ing under the influence of such preachers as Ekanāth, Tukārām and
Rāmdās brushed aside—or, at least, attempted to do so—the caste
system, recognized the equality of men before God and advocated a
life of action—very un-Hindu notions, probably borrowed in part
from Islam itself. A strong sense of national unity had developed
steadily through the seventeenth century and bound together a hardy
group of men with a common tongue (Marāthī) and a common
literature as well as a common, but rather unorthodox, Hindu creed.
Trained as mercenaries under the Deccan Sultāns, the Marātha sol-
diers had little trouble in carving out for themselves a large state out
of the disintegrating Moghul Empire in the eighteenth century.

After the death of Aurangzeb, early in the eighteenth century, the
Moghul Empire started a gradual decline, passing away as so many
former empires, struck to death by Muslim intolerance and Hindu
revivals, destroyed also by internecine quarrels opposing the three
great parties of the Muslim ruling class—the Turānīs (from Central
Asia), the Irānīs (from Persia) and the children of the soil (less
recently immigrated) or Hindustānīs. The last blow was delivered
by the great ruler of Persia, Nādir Shāh, whose invasion and sack
of Delhi destroyed what was left of the wealth, power and prestige

of the Moghul Emperors. One by one, the various provinces, feuda-
tory states, both Hindu and Muslim, rose against a disintegrating
central power and proclaimed their independence. None of the new
states was strong enough to unite India, and a last great war between
the Marāthas and invading Muslim Afghans shattered the former,
leaving a profoundly divided India helpless in front of an entirely
new breed of men who had been first blown onto the shores of Mala-
bar by the monsoon, many generations ago—the Europeans. In In-
dia, as elsewhere throughout the world, a new age was dawning.

PART III

INDIA AND EUROPE

XI

The Coming of the Europeans

JUST like China, India had experienced countless invasions over the thousands of years of its long historical existence. But all of them had come overland, streaming down into the Indo-Gangetic plains from the rugged mountain passes of the northwest, from the only vulnerable frontier of a land otherwise perfectly isolated from the rest of the world. All such invaders—Aryans, Yueh-chis and Kuṣāṇas, Huns, and more generally all those barbarians who brought no culture of their own with them—all were eventually absorbed into Hindu society. Then came the Muslims, who retained up to a point their separate identity. But now, for the first time, in the fifteenth century, an entirely different type of invader arrived from the sea—although "invader" is too strong a term to describe the tiny European fleets that first made their landfall on India's shores. Incredibly bold, the first European explorers rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1487; and eleven years later, almost unnoticed in India proper, Vasco da Gama's three small vessels and hundred and sixty men cast anchor in the spacious harbor of Calicut, having picked up an Arab pilot somewhere north of Zanzibar, off the coast of East Africa.

There was profound geopolitical compulsion behind this audacious journey to the other end of the earth. Centuries of struggle between the great power of Islamic Civilization and small and weak Western Christendom had instilled into the hearts of the West-Europeans a burning desire to *outflank* the huge Islamic domain stretching from Morocco to India. After the hopeless failure of the Crusades and the threatening establishment of Turkish power throughout the Muslim world, this desire literally conjured visions in the minds of European thinkers, setting their imaginations afire: as early as 1307, Dubois wrote his famous *De recuperatione terrae sanctae*, in which

he advocated European unity and an alliance with the Persians in order to strike the Ottomans in the back. Many other such works were written, offering countless suggestions for the destruction of Islam and advocating an all-European strategy against the Infidels. But, alongside, there was curiosity, a great yearning to know other lands, to go out and convert the heathens, to trade and conquer. Nothing is more striking to the thoughtful historian than this *objective curiosity* of the Europeans when contrasted with the total indifference of all Asians for that small West-European peninsula, its uncouth people and shoddy goods. As early as 1348, such a work as the *Libro di divisamente di pressi e misure* gave remarkably accurate information to European travelers in Asia and presented a sort of commercial geography and tourist's guidebook all rolled into one.

Behind the geopolitical compulsion there was a cultural and psychological one. The great European Culture that was born around the tenth century A.D. and then developed along lines that were so remarkably similar to those of Aryan India (more than two thousand years earlier) was bursting with energy, creative imagination and constructive visions. There was, a priori, no earthly reason why the Indians or Muslims should not have achieved, sailing westward, Vasco da Gama's remarkable feat—or, for that matter, Columbus'— if they had had a mind to do so. The technical margin of European superiority was very slight in those days. But the *will* to do so, the creative imagination, the purpose, all those were lacking among the Muslims and Indians, who had come to the end of their historical pilgrimage, whose Civilizations had become petrified, whose former vision and boldness had deserted them. Furthermore, the Europeans were moved by a strong sense of historical destiny that was unknown to other Civilizations, by an unshakable belief in the perfectibility of man and of human conditions. Compared with the refined Asians, they were crude and rough; but they had tremendous vitality and faith, and a bold determination to make their views prevail on the entire human race. Life and creation had a purpose, they were on earth to make the views of the Lord prevail, and they were going to see to it that these views would prevail.

It was this same *élan vital* that drove Vasco da Gama onto the coast of Malabar and Columbus onto that of America—or drove the Renaissance artists into a successful search for new forms of art and the scientists into new discoveries. Technical superiority in these early days hardly existed at all; the only real superiority was psychologi-

cal. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that, as time went on, European technical superiority did increase steadily, and that, in that respect as in so many others, the Asian remained static. And so, for the next four hundred years, the current of history flowed continuously in one direction, and one direction only.

Ever since Islam had established its domination in western Asia, one of its many by-products had been to place maritime trade in the Indian Ocean almost entirely in the hands of Arab seamen. Various Indian nations reserved for themselves the relatively minor coastal trade and accepted the Arab naval supremacy in the ocean without question. This satisfactory division of labor came to an end upon the appearance of the doughty Portuguese, who claimed sole right of navigation; sooner or later, a fateful conflict was bound to follow. The great geopolitical struggle then took shape. Alarmed, the Ottoman Turks, the Mamlūk Sultān of Egypt and allied Muslims took on a Portuguese squadron in 1508 and mauled it badly. The Muslims were good sailors and just as good artillerymen as the Portuguese. But this was only a skirmish; the real danger of the maritime supremacy of the Arabs lay in the fact that there was no available timber in the Red Sea area, and that the nearest timberland was in the Taurus mountains. In 1506, half of the supply sent for the construction of the Indian Ocean fleet that was to beat off the Portuguese was intercepted and destroyed by the Christian Knights of Rhodes. The result was the shattering defeat inflicted, in 1509, by the Portuguese on the combined Arab-Egyptian fleet assisted by a number of Indian ships. That battle marked the end of Islam's naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean. And the soft underbelly of the Muslim world was now fully exposed to the Portuguese —and to all the other European powers who followed them in quick succession.

The Portuguese Admiral Pedro Alvarez Cabral, who had followed up Vasco da Gama's exploratory journey, presented a threatening letter from the king of Portugal to the Zamorin of Calicut, claiming divine sanction for his subjects' maritime feat, explaining his desire to protect the Christian Indians settled from time immemorial on the coast of Malabar, and ending with an ill-concealed menace: "And if it should happen that . . . we find in you the contrary of this . . . our fixed purpose is to prosecute this affair and continue our navigation, trade and intercourse in those lands which the Lord

God wishes to be newly served by our hands.''[1] The tenor of the coming relationship between Europe and the East was contained in this letter.

All this happened long before the establishment of the Moghul Empire, and shows how slight was the first European impact on India proper—that is, India beyond the Western Ghats—at a time when the Deccan Sultāns were struggling against the empire of Vijayanagar. The Portuguese dealt only with small local potentates such as the Zamorin of Calicut or the Rājah of Cochin, puny little princes who could be intimidated by a small margin of technical superiority and a ruthless policy of calculated cruelty and terror designed to conceal the small numbers of the Europeans. The coastal states of Malabar were weak, because they were geographically and politically isolated from the rest of India and divided politically among themselves. In those days, the Europeans did not appear to be a great threat; except for some slight advantages in gunnery and maritime skill, there was hardly any difference between Portuguese, Muslims and Hindus. No Indian saw in them the first wave of the European flood that was to engulf them centuries later.

Naval struggle between the Portuguese and the various Asian powers of the Indian Ocean continued sporadically until the end of the sixteenth century. The far greater ruthlessness and savagery of the Portuguese in these contests compelled the Indians to discard their civilized manners and improve their techniques—which they could no longer do alone; they had to import Italians and other European advisers to help them. But time was on the side of the Europeans; the same inquiring vitality and creative imagination that had launched them upon the discovery of the Indian Ocean, drove them to one technical and scientific discovery after another. The Asians, even by importing other European experts, could no longer compete with them. The European margin of technical superiority increased steadily, and everything else came along with it. Still, it took plenty of time. Triumphs at sea did not yet spell triumphs on land. For instance, severely beaten by the Zamorin in a pitched battle near Calicut, the Portuguese decided to shift their base to the more easily defensible position of the island of Goa, on the border of two rival states where they could play off the Vijayanagar Empire against the Sultān Adil Shah.

Thus was the colonial policy of European nations set from the start—not by design but by accident, by the requirements of trade

and prompted by a missionary spirit. Very much like their successors, the Portuguese rulers did not want territorial possessions in the Orient. They were after trade monopolies, not great empires. And, along with trade, they had a burning desire to stab Islam in the back, to destroy a hated Muslim Civilization, and break the almost complete monopoly of the great East-West trade held by the Muslims in Constantinople, Damascus and Cairo. But while the Portuguese were gaining their triumphs in the Indian Ocean, the Ottoman Turks were unifying the Muslim world by shattering the Persian army, destroying the Mamlūk power and taking over Egypt and Arabia together with its Red Sea and Persian Gulf coastline, and striking out of the Balkans toward the heart of Europe itself; Islam was instinctively tightening its defenses under the impact of this unexpected blow at its rear. And all the while, the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean were trying to devise some new scheme that would weaken the Ottoman power—such a scheme as Albuquerque's device of diverting the flow of the Nile and ruining Egypt.[2]

The virulent enmity toward the Turks was so overriding that the Portuguese rulers could think of hardly anything else. Surprised by the unintentional acquisition of Goa, the Lisbon authorities suggested at first returning it to its rightful owner, Abdul Khan. But there and then, another important characteristic of European colonialism began to come to light: faraway proconsuls could always disregard instructions from home, if they thought it wise to do so. Albuquerque proceeded, unconcerned, with his plans to transform Goa into an impregnable Portuguese base, regardless of Lisbon's instructions. And this became standard procedure, all the way to the great British imperialist Raffles, who, three hundred years later, acquired Singapore against the wishes of the government in London. And so, impelled by the logic of trade and commercial imperialism, the Portuguese went on to create one base after another, all the way from Muscat (Arabia) and Ormuz (Persia), to Malacca (Malaya) and Macao (China). They were not exactly colonies but fortified trading posts with extraterritorial status, the indispensable adjunct of the monopoly of maritime transportation.

The first religious contact between India and Europe took place when Roman Catholic missionaries landed in Goa, early in the sixteenth century. A few Dominicans and a far greater number of Franciscan friars were soon sufficiently well settled to challenge the

civilian power and take over some of its privileges. For the first time in history, even taking the depredations of the Muslims into account, *religious intolerance* became the order of the day on a small portion of Indian soil: forced conversions of recalcitrant Indians, destruction by fire and arson of Hindu temples, death sentences and *autos da fé* promulgated by the Holy Inquisition. All this, of course, took place within the restricted confines of a few isolated bases strewn along the Malabar coasts and went unnoticed in the rest of India. Indians had seen countless invasions over the ages and paid no attention. And if the Portuguese had been compelled to leave India a hundred years after the arrival of Albuquerque, they would have left fewer traces than any other invader.

What was far more significant than the barbarous conduct of the Holy Inquisition was the arrival of an entirely different religious order: the Jesuits, bold men who were about to make a bid for world-wide supremacy by penetrating deeply into the fabric of all alien societies and exploring countless unknown lands in the four corners of the world. The Jesuits were a unique product of European Culture in full development, a religious order like no other, whose remarkable men and ubiquitous power struck all other Europeans (Roman Catholics as well as Protestants) as being absolutely uncanny. Jesuitism sprang full-blown from the brain of the Spanish prophet-mystic Ignatius Loyola, whose doctrine was strange by the standards then prevailing in the Catholic Church, one which certainly owed something to Muslim Sūfism as it had been known in Spain for centuries. On perusing Loyola's famous *Spiritual Exercises,* one is struck by a strange feature: for the first time in the history of European Culture, mysticism, hitherto an *art,* becomes a *technique.* For the first time, Western mysticism is treated in Yoga fashion, brought under the control of the will, disciplined. Every impulse of the exercitant is made to conform to a definite psychological pattern; the inner life and imagination are not left to arbitrary moods of the moment but brought under the control of a purposeful will. The *Spiritual Exercises* severely mark out the necessary stages of the mystic's progression, and their required sequence, and just as sternly warn that "no foreign emotion, however noble, should interrupt the prescribed course, so that when lamentations over sin or the pains of death should be tasted, the consolation of redemption and resurrection should not intrude, out of its place."[3]

The *Spiritual Exercises,* without the benefit of the great knowl-

edge of physiology obtained by the greatest Indian *yogis,* go so far as to prescribe what the outward bearing of the exercitant should be during the performance of his mystical exercises, how to breathe in and out during his meditations, what his bodily posture should be. In order to vitalize desired concepts, it prescribes the specific time when the cell should be darkened, when the exercitant should look upon dead men's skulls or when he should contemplate fresh flowers in order to call to mind "the blossoming of the spiritual life."[4] All such exercises are performed under the direction of a "master of the exercises," a sort of Jesuit *guru* who adapts the schedule to the individual aptitudes of the exercitant.

The most intelligent Europeans of the times knew that they had a revolutionary technique in their hands when they heard of Loyola's doctrine: "At last the passions have found their master," cried Co-chlaeus, one of the great humanistic opponents of that slave of passion, Martin Luther.[5] And it was rightly said of the *Spiritual Exercises,* the fruit of Loyola's own personal excruciating inner struggles, that "This book is not intended for those who merely read, but for those who wish to do."

So far, nothing would seem to distinguish Jesuit mysticism from any form of Oriental mysticism. However, behind the Western *mystic,* the *prophet* always lurks—especially in Jesuitism. Speaking for Western Culture, Rudolf Kassner emphasized that mystical greatness, in the end, is invalidated because the mystic "lives without measure."[6] He lives out of history and out of *time;* whereas Jesuitism drags its mystics back into history, not as individual prophets who would be free to act as they please, but as blind tools of the Order, as disciplined soldiers of a crusading militant Church. This was something wholly alien to Indian Civilization, the possibility or need for which had never been conceived by Indians. The utter, inhuman discipline of the Jesuits struck all other Europeans with awe; absolute obedience to the orders of the superior could only be obtained because every member of the Order saw in the superior almost an incarnation (the immanentist bent of all mystics) of the divine. Thus obedience was transformed into a sort of *unio mystica.* The union usually achieved by mystics, the world over, with God, is achieved by the Jesuit with the Order in the person of the superior.

One would think that such fantastic depersonalization of the average Jesuit would leave him helpless when isolated, without specific instructions, in some remote part of the world. But that was not at

all the case. No men were more profoundly original, bolder and yet more understanding of all human idiosyncrasies than the Jesuits; many of them lived almost alone and isolated in areas as remote from their main centers as if they had been on a distant planet, without hope or desire to ever come back to Europe; they wrote remarkable studies of alien cultures and religions, worked out countless compromises, wrote countless works of Christian apologetics in alien tongues and displayed individual greatness on a heroic scale. Decadence came later, but in those days they constituted the most powerful instrument of historical destiny ever placed in the hands of a human society.

All this serves to explain the fate of their action in India, action that can be conveniently divided into two parts: South India, and the Muslim-dominated northern part of India. South India was still in Hindu hands when, after a long and arduous preparation, Robert de Nobili appeared in 1606 in the great Hindu city of Madura. Many other Jesuits had gone to India before him, clothed in rags, ringing little bells while striding through fishing villages, trying to convert the poor and the slaves. But no one would have recognized in Father de Nobili a Jesuit; he was the first representative of a new type of missionary, the symbol of a new awareness of the Order that Christian missions should strike at the head rather than the main body of alien societies, that the Brāhmins were the real target, and that once the Brāhmanical citadel would be taken, all others would fall into their hands. Tanned by the sun, wearing the saffron robe and sacred thread of the "twice-born," a turban on his head and wooden sandals on his feet, he looked the perfect image of a distinguished Brāhmin—and far more surprising, he acted and spoke like one. If asked suspiciously whether he was a Portuguese, he would deny it with a look of wounded pride and declare himself to be a Roman Brāhmin who had come to study with his fellow-Brāhmins in India. This did not prevent him from running into trouble, at first. He did not fully understand the super-regal power of the Brāhmin caste and it was almost too late when he became aware of it. Becoming suspicious of his motives, ". . . two Brāhmins at once started an agitation to have Nobili . . . expelled from Madura. The Brāhmin caste had power to pass such a sentence—or worse—without reference to the Nāyak [King], merely by a condemnation of unorthodoxy in public assembly."[7] He weathered the storm successfully, however.

Speaking the language perfectly, knowing more about Hinduism than the best among the Indians, never touching alcohol or meat, refraining from all intercourse with the lower castes, Father de Nobili soon came to be accepted as the most genuine Brāhmin of them all. He knew Sanskrit literature, could quote the *Vedas* and other sacred texts profusely, sang with deep feeling some of the most beautiful *rāgs* known to Indian music. Once he was well established, however, he came down to the business at hand, and outlined to his fellow Brāhmins all the points of similarity between Hinduism and Christianity. He reached the climax of his exhortations when he explained that the only difference was that Christianity contained all the elements of Hinduism, but better expressed and, if he was allowed to say so, perfected. Nobili's success was considerable, and before long Madura had a substantial number of Christian Brāhmins.

However, there remained the problem of the lower castes. How and by whom were they going to be converted? The only solution, thought the Jesuits, was to introduce the caste system within the Order itself. Soon, a new type of Jesuit missionary appeared: the Jesuit disguised as a *sannyāsīn* or a *sādhu,* the holy man who was beyond caste and could associate with any man, Brāhmin or outcaste, without being defiled. So, without any surprise, Nobili saw one day the Jesuit-sannyāsīn da Costa arrive in Madura and start his work without giving any signs of recognizing him. Other Jesuits appeared, and when Nobili retired after many years of work, there were forty thousand converts in Madura alone.

Northern India was a different matter altogether. There, the problem was to reach the summit of a centralized Muslim realm, not a vast, headless body of suspicious Brāhmins. Christian action could be overt, instead of concealed as in South India. And it was the Jesuits' luck that such an emperor as Akbar should have acceded to the throne, a man sincerely thirsting for religious knowledge and guidance. Along with Brāhmins, Muslims, Parsīs and representatives of other faiths, the Jesuits were invited to come to Fathpur Sikrī as honored guests of the Great Moghul. The Order promptly dispatched its most skilled theologians—Rudolfo Acquaviva, Emmanuel Pinheiro, Jerome Xavier and Benedict Goes—and from the very beginning of the debates, the dynamic Jesuits displayed an almost aggravating superiority over all their rivals. They had a profound knowledge of Hindu scriptures, Buddhism, Zoroaster and the Koran;

and in all debates they always sought to please their antagonists as long as they could, and then manage the transition to the demonstration of Christianity's evident superiority as smoothly as possible. Their rivals were not easily persuaded; but Akbar was profoundly impressed, sufficiently so to let the Jesuits open a church and a college in Āgra, with full freedom to baptize and preach to his subjects. For himself, however, Akbar hesitated: instinctively faithful to the Muslim outlook, he could not overcome his repugnance toward the doctrines of the Godhead's Trinity and of the Almighty's Incarnation in Jesus. The Christian emphasis on humility, especially Christ's humility, hurt his innate sense of pride, as it has all Muslims, before and since. For days and nights, in Āgra and around campfires when at war, Akbar summoned the Jesuit fathers and plied them with questions; for sleepless nights on end, the Jesuits would meditate and pray for the answer that would make of Akbar a new Constantine— an emperor who would bring a whole continent over to the true faith. But they failed. Akbar eventually came up with his own creed and the defeated Jesuits had to depart.

This was a limited failure, however. The Jesuits worked successfully in other parts of India, especially along the Malabar coast, and their successes could have had historical significance if the other Catholic priests and missionaries had not let jealousy overcome them. True, the Jesuits had gone extremely far in their compromises, further than they were going at the time in China. From concession to concession, the Jesuits, without perhaps realizing it fully, were about to launch a new Hindu sect rather than convert their disciples to Christianity. Soon, indignant reports began to flood the Vatican about the behavior of the Jesuits, and we have only to read an address of the Capuchins to the governor and council of Pondicherry in 1707 to realize how far the Jesuits had gone on the road of compromises:

You should not wonder, gentlemen, if the Malabari Christians, who had nothing about them of the heathen when under the guidance of their legitimate shepherd, have become more heathen than Christian after falling under the rule of thieves and robbers [the Jesuits]. You who are on the spot see every day the poor Christians smearing themselves over like masqueraders. Some cover their bodies with heathen marks, others cover their foreheads with cow's ashes. . . . The men wear jewels in their ears representing the attributes

of false gods, the women hang *talīs* on their necks with a cross on one side and the head of an idol on the other. These ornaments are blessed by the reverend Jesuit fathers, and in their church they cause them to be put by the bridegroom upon the bride. One caste is separated from another in church, and the wretched Pariahs receive the most Holy Sacrament at the door, while other castes are admitted at the Holy Table.[8]

To this long list of alleged misdeeds, the Jesuits were additionally charged with performing marriage ceremonies for girls of six or seven and allowing ceremonies symbolizing sex with the use of leaves of pipal trees. The Society of Jesus was under constant attack for its policies in China as well as in India, but it would seem that the charges leveled against them in India were far better substantiated. The virulence with which these attacks, conducted by Capuchins and Franciscans, slashed out at the Jesuits' "unholy compromise" with Hinduism, must have given a strange idea of European Christianity to any Brāhmin who happened to watch the controversy. It might also have tickled his pride in his own culture to notice to what extent it had swallowed the doughty missionaries of this alien faith. A picture drawn by the famed Abbé Dubois, portraying a Christian religious procession in the eighteenth century, gives an idea of the weirdness of Indian Christianity (for which the Jesuits were not alone to blame):

Accompanied with hundreds of tom-toms, trumpets and all the discordant music of the country; with numberless torches and fireworks; the statue of the saint is placed on a car which is charged with garlands of flowers and other gaudy ornaments according to the taste of the country—the car slowly dragged along by a multitude shouting all along the march—the congregation surrounding the car all in confusion, several among them dancing or playing with small sticks or native swords; some wrestling, some playing the fool; all shouting or conversing with each other, without any one exhibiting the least sign of respect or devotion."[9]

What European missionaries failed to realize—that is, all missionaries save the Jesuits—was that, as everywhere else, they were not propagating the message of Jesus and the Gospels, but a specifically West-European form of Christianity that was suited only to West-Europeans; that if they wanted to make headway in India, they

were compelled to make at least as many concessions to local customs and traditions as the Jesuits had made; and that, failing this, Western Christianity would make very little progress—as, indeed, it did. Hardly more than 1 per cent of the Indian population has gone over to Christianity after four hundred years of steady intercourse with Europe, whereas 25 per cent of the population went over to Islam. The boundless richness of the Hindu faith, its universal appeal, its tolerance, the profundity of Hindu philosophy and its enduring roots among the Indian people, all this made India a poor soil for West-Christian sowing—unless it could emulate Islam's democratic appeal. The millions of untouchables and Pariahs who had remained outside the pale of Hindu society could have perhaps been brought within the folds of Western Christianity if European missionaries had had a greater understanding, not only of Hindu faith and culture, but also of themselves and of the true nature of their own creed. As it was, early Christian proselytism was a failure. We shall see that another Christian movement developed later in the nineteenth century. It was, however, largely intellectual and left the main body of Hinduism untouched.

Year in and year out, large fleets sailed from Lisbon, some for the coasts of Brazil or Africa, but most for the Indian Ocean. Portuguese ships swarmed everywhere, wealth poured into Portugal, and the splendor of Goa, the island capital of this fabulous maritime empire, soon outshone any European court. At first, the Indians and Asians in general had viewed these newcomers without undue alarm, although with a degree of curiosity. A report sent from Colombo to the King of Ceylon is typical of this attitude: "There is in our harbor of Colombo a race of people of fair skin and comely withal. They don jackets of iron and hats of iron; they rest not a minute in one place; they walk here and there. . . . the report of their cannon is louder than thunder,"[10] a striking description of the impetuous energy of European man seen from the rather lethargic tropics. Many Asians soon came to sense that these weird Europeans who sailed in from the other side of the globe had some inner mainspring which gave them an uncanny power—not really technical power so much as psychological strength. It was more a matter of personal skill and individual initiative, a strength and continuity of purpose that made the difference. Western man lived in a world of far larger dimensions (psychologically speaking) than the Asians of the times. Conscious

that he was making history, he had far greater will and purpose, greater memory of the past and far-seeing vision into the future. More than anything else, what struck the Asians was the European's far greater persistence and determination, the continuity of his effort —the history-conscious European was sliding along the time-dimension as if it were a concrete substance, working on the future as if it were clay in his hands. Long-term aims, teamwork, the systematic build-up of knowledge, the steady consolidation of positions once acquired, everything distinguished sharply the European attitude from the more haphazard, disorganized approach of the Asians.

Yet decay soon overcame the first Europeans who had discovered the new world of the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese Empire was a Latin-Catholic realm, and its decay was largely due to the fact that its spirit did not remain true to the basic tenets of Western Culture. The realism, staying power and foresight of the Portuguese could not match the intensity and fixity of purpose of their rising Protestant rivals. Yet their very human weaknesses gave to their Oriental epic a romantic charm which their Nordic Protestant rivals lacked entirely. But charm and decay often go together; although trade flourished for a while in the Portuguese dominions, there was no real economic progress and no political stability. The Lusitanians remained quite contentedly on the coast of Malabar, isolated from the rest of India by the craggy Western Ghats, trading furiously and piling up colossal fortunes, gradually losing their former dynamism, destroying their own character and energy. And at a time when the total population of Portugal had barely reached one and a half million, such world-wide commitments had become a crushing burden. The great days of King Henry the Navigator and King Dom Manoel were gone forever.

Fratricidal quarrels which had started early between Almeida and Albuquerque had progressively destroyed all sense of national discipline. The absence of Portuguese women, which forced Portuguese men to marry local women, and the gradual depopulation of Portugal finally dealt a deathblow to this far-flung empire. Mixed marriages, the warm humidity of the tropical climate, a lazy enjoyment of unlimited luxuries finally diluted the barbaric energy of the Portuguese, creating in Ormuz, Goa and even Macao a delightful but effeminate and thoroughly ineffectual class of Portuguese half-castes who became, in time, completely absorbed by their Oriental environment. The dwindling population of Portugal proper, decimated by

epidemics imported from abroad, could send forth no more emigrants.

The disintegration of the Portuguese empire was slow but continuous, and the more farsighted Lusitanians saw no mysterious secret in this progressive decline. Referring to Portuguese India, the Jesuit Father Fernao de Queroz wrote that "We could have been masters of India if we had been masters of ourselves."[11] This indispensable self-discipline, which was sorely lacking in southern Europe at the time (and was partly responsible for the Reformation), was, however, a remarkable feature of the Protestant Europeans of the north; what the Nordics lacked in the way of Latin charm and wit, they made up in undaunted energy and iron determination. The significant gesture of all Portuguese soldiers and traders of dropping their spoons into the ocean after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, implying that they were now free to eat rice with their fingers, symbolized the ease with which the Portuguese were ready to give up the hard-won standards of European Culture and surrender unconditionally to the warm embrace of the Oriental tropics.[12]

Today, the colorful remains of a once-great empire are still to be seen, a romantic museum open to those visitors who long to relive the whole epic of the Latin discovery of the Orient: quiet Goa with its sleeping churches overgrown with tamarind and jungle vines, its heavily bolted doors and barred windows, hiding in their ghostly shadows the crumbling ruins of the Palace of the Inquisition, suffused with an atmosphere of decay and death.

Early religious proselytism in India was only a passing phase, doomed to disappearance when the Portuguese empire collapsed. From then on, for centuries, one thing, and one thing only, attracted Europeans to India: trade. The various other European powers, mostly Protestant, were more economically minded, more energetic and more efficient. The ethos of Protestantism, especially Calvinism and Puritanism, was in the ascendant in Europe and stamped its commercial outlook on the relations between Europe and India. And so, one company after another came into being: the English East India Company secured a trading monopoly in 1600—from the English, not the Indians. The United East India Company of the Netherlands was incorporated in 1602; the Danes came in 1616; the French East India Company was formed in 1664; the Ostend Company was organized by the merchants of Flanders; the Swedish East

India Company was charted in 1722. Armed quarrels were inevitable between many of those companies, who had many of the privileges of sovereign states; but most of them were eventually eliminated from India by the British, leaving the Dutch to busy themselves with the rich islands of Indonesia; only the French remained as serious contenders on the Indian mainland.

The rise of British naval power dates from its destruction of the Spanish Armada, and went on developing steadily throughout the seventeenth century. All the great qualities developed by the Protestant Reformation in Britain, the remarkable toughness of the Puritans, and the gradual ascendancy of an economic spirit borrowed from the Dutch gave to the first contacts between Britain and India a special character. Having to fight at home against an indifferent government and outdated economic concepts, abroad against their Portuguese and then Dutch rivals, the English East India Company grew by trial and error, imbued with the Puritan spirit of adventurous individualism, and wholly devoted to the steady, unspectacular progress of trade and commerce with the fabulously wealthy lands of the Orient. Early in 1613, Emperor Jahāngīr issued a *firman* allowing the British to establish permanently a trading station and a factory at Surāt, a small and modest beginning for a great empire.

Little by little, the British extracted from the Moghuls permission to establish other trading posts throughout the Empire—Āgra, Ahmadābād and Broach. Others were added later on, notably Bombay, a former Portuguese station—one that became so important that by the end of the seventeenth century it was the chief British settlement on the west coast. More stations were founded on the southeastern coast: Masulipatam, Armāgāon and Madras. Leases were obtained, no longer from the Moghuls, who did not then rule the area, but from local potentates—the Sultān of Golkundā, the ruler of Chandragiri (the last pitiful representative of the great imperial dynasty of ruined Vijayanagar). Then came expansion toward the northeast: Hugli, Patna, Cāssimbāzār and Balāsore. Temporary difficulties during the Cromwellian revolution were overcome at the end of the seventeenth century, and the financial structure of the East India Company (now backed by a permanent joint-stock) improved steadily. From one end of the Indian coast to other, strings of small, prosperous establishments surrounded the Indian subcontinent, the first stage in an imperial expansion that no one suspected at the time, and that no one would have desired if it had been suspected.

Birth of an Empire:
The Rise of British Power

GREAT and enduring empires are the result of circumstances rather than of men's conscious will. They just *happen* because of historical necessity, because countries fall to pieces owing to internal circumstances and because outsiders are almost compelled, often against their own wishes, to pick up the pieces. They endure because of the tacit acquiescence of the conquered and last only so long as this acquiescence lasts. With very few exceptions the Indian populations had long ago lost all interest in politics, leaving warfare to professional soldiers and statesmanship and diplomacy to the Caesarian rulers who fought each other ruthlessly. Mostly self-governing through their caste and village councils, they accepted more or less meekly the rulers which fate decreed for them, many of whom were low-caste adventurers who were willing to soil their hands in the dirty world of politics. They had accepted for hundreds of years the rule of alien Muslims and, except for sporadic rebellions, had merely tried to tighten the bonds knitting their society together and let the Muslims rule as they pleased. And this attitude did not change when the Europeans appeared on the scene.

But toward the end of the seventeenth century the great power and splendor of the Moghuls was long past its zenith. The inherent centrifugal tendencies of India were reasserting themselves and were undermining the foundations of the Islamic empire; the orders of the central government were more or less openly disregarded in the outlying portions of the realm, and the dream of a truly united India was fading away, once again. The long wars between the Marāthas and the Deccan rulers, the increasing weakness of Moghul power in Bengal, the destructive policy of Emperor Aurangzeb, everything

presaged a coming collapse of the great empire. New blood was no longer pouring in from Central Asia as in the past, and the new life of the easy tropics was taking its toll of Muslim energy and dynamism. Lawlessness increased, the pirates on the coast of Malabar were becoming daily more audacious; commerce was being interfered with—an intolerable situation for the European traders.

Under the circumstances, British policy was bound to change. If peaceful trade became difficult, it was up to the traders to protect themselves; if the local authorities proved incompetent to deal with the growing anarchy, outsiders would have to do the policing—at least to the extent of protecting peaceful commerce. This cardinal change in the policy of the British was carefully announced in a letter written by the Governor of Bombay to the Court of Directors in 1669 when he recognized that "the times now require you to manage your general commerce with the sword in your hands."[1] It was only a statement of facts as they were, not yet a new policy. But a new policy was bound to follow, and was clearly outlined in a letter of instructions sent by the Directors to the Chief at Madras in 1687: "to establish such a politie of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue to secure both . . . as may be the foundation of a large, well grounded, secure English dominion in India for all time to come."[2] Naval skirmishes between the British and the Moghuls (as far as the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, where the British interfered with the pilgrimage to Mecca) were followed by a last reassertion of Moghul power and a temporary truce between British and Moghul authorities in 1690.

The unconscious, involuntary build-up of a new empire was now under way. The East India Company became increasingly prosperous, and increasing prosperity brought on increasing hunger for more of the same. In 1715 the Company sent an embassy to the Moghul court and wrested from the weak ruler extensive privileges throughout the Empire, including the right to trade in Bengal free of all duties, to rent additional territory around Calcutta, and the right to coin money in Bombay and to circulate it throughout India. The *firman* of 1716–1717 became known as the "Magna Charta" of the Company, the major step in the establishment of this new type of politico-commercial power on Indian soil. Increasing prosperity attracted the Indians themselves, and twenty years later, the city of Calcutta alone had more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. The Company's towns and stations were fortified, out of necessity, and

the number of armed ships for harbor protection increased steadily. Whenever possible, good relations were established, not so much with a weakening central power at Delhi, but with local powers—the Marāthas, the Nawāb of the Carnatic and his overlord, the Subahdār of the Deccan.

The British involvements in local Indian politics were still limited, however; there was as yet no conscious desire for empire. But a new chain of events brought them a step closer to this inevitable involvement: the increasing activities of the rival French East India Company. Last to arrive on the scene, the French made up for lost time and struck out boldly in the first half of the eighteenth century—not merely in India, but all over the world, where they challenged the British on land and at sea. A string of French trading stations, headed by Pondicherry, was soon winding itself up the east coast of India; but the French were only after trade, with no political ambitions in the background. And no real political ambitions of the kind ever really developed in Paris; whatever political ambitions did develop after 1742 germinated in the brain of a lone man of genius, Dupleix.

In the eighteenth century, and for the first time in its history, India was no longer a massive, more or less isolated world of its own, but part of a larger world woven together by European naval supremacy. And for the first time, India was becoming a pawn of external rivalries, not a main object of conquest in itself. The fate of India was no longer sealed in India but at the other end of the world, in Paris or London, where more or less farsighted statesmen drew maps, made plans and sent or withheld supplies, troops and ships. In their calculations, India was weighed against Canada or the American colonies or the Caribbean islands, as an amorphous entity without will or consciousness of its own. And while this new development was taking place, the ever lurking centrifugal forces within India were destroying the whole fabric of Moghul power.

For twenty years, in the very middle of the eighteenth century, the Carnatic (the name given at the time to the coast of Coromandel and its hinterland) became the scene of a fateful struggle for world power between the French and the British. The European powers had already asserted an undoubted superiority over the Indians: they alone possessed naval forces, and therefore mobility; their technical superiority became more pronounced, especially in the realm of military efficiency; and the disunion of the Indians was in-

creasing apace. The Subahdār of the Deccan had, for all practical purposes, made himself independent of the Moghul emperor; but, in turn, his subordinates, especially the Nawāb of Arcot, made themselves independent of him. It should not be thought that the Indians at the time took the European traders very seriously; they did not and felt free to indulge in internecine quarrels without any thought of foreign threat. And the Europeans, at the beginning of this period, were still engrossed in trade and nothing else. This state of affairs might have gone on almost endlessly if it had not been for local European wars (the War of the Austrian Succession from 1740 to 1748 and the Seven Years' War); the European conflicts were bound to overflow into India as they extended also to America and all other parts of the world where the European contenders were present. And this overflow dragged into its wake a number of Indian potentates: for the first time, European powers began to dream of Indian empires.

One by one, all the important features of this new situation began to emerge out of the din and confusion of battle, on land and at sea: the defeat of the huge army of Nawāb Anwār-ud-dīn by a handful of French soldiers sounded the death knell of Indian military power and stirred imperialistic instincts in European hearts; Britain's naval supremacy sounded the death knell of French colonial power, in India as elsewhere—and so did the fact that French power depended, as it has often since, on the genius of one man (on this occasion, Dupleix) without support in Paris. The British displayed a far more effective collective leadership, far greater teamwork and an obstinate determination, whereas the French became easily discouraged. And it was precisely because Dupleix became conscious of the French inferiority that he argued with great perspicacity that only an alliance with the Indians themselves could save the French empire in India. He sensed that his small but highly effective army was an invaluable asset and that many an Indian prince would be only too glad to have it on its side in any contest with some rival prince. And so it was the French, rather than the British, who inaugurated the policy of interfering in Indian politics, a new development that had far-reaching consequences.

No sooner was the new idea born in Dupleix's fertile brain than it was put to execution. Concluding a treaty with Chanda Sahīb and Muzaffar Jang to put them on the thrones of the Carnatic and the Deccan respectively, he turned around and with his two allies

crushed and killed Nawāb Anwār-ud-dīn at the battle of Ambur.
From then on, there was no turning back: whatever European power
would remain in India would be compelled to get more and ever
more involved in Indian politics until an empire was established.
The British had no choice but to follow in Dupleix' footsteps and
get involved in their turn: they gathered up a powerful coalition of
princes—Muhammad 'Ali (son of Anwār-ud-dīn, and embittered
against the French), the rulers of Mysore and Tanjore and the Ma-
rātha chief Morārī Rāo. By then, there were no wars in Europe, and
Britain and France were nominally at peace. They fought in India,
ostensibly as auxiliaries of Indian powers, but in fact as principals
in a desperate struggle for empire. It made no difference to history
whether some Indian rulers won and others lost; it was an unhistori-
cal, purely zoological struggle in an amoral political jungle. But it
made a great difference to history whether the French or the British
were in the ascendancy.

The end could no longer be in doubt. Not only did the British
enjoy supremacy at sea; not only did they have full support from
London, whereas the French were getting none from Paris; the fact
was also that the British could bring all their other Indian resources
to bear on the Carnatic, resources from Bombay on the west coast,
and from Bengal in the north. It took a Third Carnatic War (coin-
ciding with the Seven Years' War in Europe) to dispose for all times
of the French power in India: on January 16, 1761, the great
French base of Pondicherry surrendered to the British, and its ruth-
less destruction by the victors symbolized the end of French ambi-
tions in India; they lost all their possessions, and the few crumbs
they were allowed to retain later were only a pitiful reminder of past
greatness.

A few years before the final expulsion of the French from India,
some significant developments had taken place in Bengal. Compelled
by their fear of the French to fortify Calcutta, the British had begun
to antagonize the Indian authorities. The new Nawāb Sirāj-ud-
daulah (nominally a *subahdār* of the Moghul Emperor, but in fact
an independent ruler) made it plain that he considered the British as
traders and nothing else, and ordered them to tear down Calcutta's
fortifications. The British refused, and hostilities broke out, culminat-
ing in the historical battle of Plassey in 1757 where Clive smashed
Sirāj-ud-daulah's army and put an end to his power in Bengal;

simultaneously, conspiracies and treachery had destroyed Sirāj-ud-daulah's authority at home, conforming with the established pattern of Indian politics. The fact that they paved the way for British domination in Bengal mattered little to the conspirators, who, evidently, had not the slightest feeling of patriotism; both they and men such as Sirāj-ud-daulah fought for naked political power and booty, not for national ideals; the ultimate triumph of the British was preordained.

The British put a new *subahdār*, Nawāb Mīr Jāfar, on the throne of Bengal and obtained all the privileges they sought for: their unquestioned sovereignty over Calcutta, grant of territories for the maintenance of well-equipped military forces, and the right to keep a Resident at the Nawāb's court. In fact, the reality of power had now gravitated into the hands of Clive, and Bengal had become virtually a British protectorate as well as a base for the further extension of British power toward the interior of India. Having secured an imperial *firman* from Emperor Shāh 'Ālam II in 1765, the British were legally entrusted with the Diwānī of Bengal, Bihār and Orissa; and instead of consolidating the power of the Moghul Emperor, the British proceeded to abet the gradual dismemberment of his empire by restoring the state of Oudh to its legitimate Nawāb, the first of those buffer states which promptly became new advanced bases for new British conquests.

Progress of British imperialism in Bengal was followed by progress in other quarters. Sallying forth from their secure bases at Madras and Bombay, the British now took every opportunity to interfere in local Indian quarrels; and the Indians themselves were never backward in asking for British interference. Thirsting for the possession of certain maritime territories around Bombay, the British accepted the request of Raghunāth Rāo, the lawful Peshwā of the Marāthas, and went to war against the Poona government and army. British victory followed upon British victory, and there was no longer an Indian prince who was left in doubt as to the wisdom of taking British power in deadly earnest. All ambitious Indians who intrigued when out of power, sought out the British and offered them new bases and new lands in exchange for help against rival Indians. Playing a game of sheer power politics with or against, depending on circumstances, the Marāthas, the Nizām and the Sultān of Mysore, the British soon found themselves so deeply involved in a series of complex situations that they began to regret their commitments. As

happens time and again in such circumstances, they attempted to halt the whole process and preserve the status quo. Writing a furious letter to the Madras Government, which had concluded a treaty of alliance with the vacillating Nizām—who then reversed himself and went over to the hostile Sultān of Mysore—the Court of Directors remarked: "You have brought us into such a labyrinth of difficulties that we do not see how we shall be extricated from them." And then, with a sigh and a wistful glance backward, the Court went on: ". . . it is not for the Company to take the part of umpires of Indostan. If it had not been for the imprudent measures you have taken, the country powers would have formed a balance among themselves. We wish to see the Indian princes remain as a check upon one another without our interfering."[3]

But there was no stopping the clock. Implacably involved in Indian affairs, dragged into all the complexities of Indian politics against their own better judgment, the British had to wage one war after another: three wars against the Marāthas, four wars against Mysore, a major war against the Ruhelas, and countless minor campaigns. A growing network of alliances, treaties of friendship or protection extended British influence further and further. A bold leap forward took place under the governor-generalship of Lord Wellesley, when the Peshwā of the Marāthas signed the Treaty of Bassein and accepted the "Subsidiary Alliance"—in fact brought the Marāthas, the most vigorous and virile people in India, under British protectorate. Further wars with the Marāthas followed but the game was up: British supremacy could no longer be successfully challenged. The Company could not control its ambitious proconsuls in India, who understood that trade monopolies entailed political power; even though its conquests were becoming too large "for profitable management,"[4] there was no turning back.

Early in the nineteenth century, the trend was becoming so obvious that one prince after another agreed to place himself under British protection. But many wars still had to be waged: war against the marauding Pindarīs in Central India, against the doughty Pathāns, against the Gurkhās of Nepal, extension of British paramountcy over Rājasthān, Bhopal and other minor states. By the time Lord Hastings left India in 1823, British dominions extended from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas and from the Sutlej to the Brahmaputra; the Moghul Empire no longer existed although there was still a nom-

inal Emperor and the Company was the supreme power in the sub-
continent.

That one involvement brings on another, and so on ad infinitum,
was soon proved by the fact that the British had to extend their sway
further and further beyond the frontiers of India proper for the
sheer sake of protecting their existing possessions. They had built
their empire largely to protect themselves against the French of the
ancien régime, then against the French of the Great Revolution and
Napoleon; that danger removed, another one took its place: the
glacier-like advance of the Russians in Central Asia. And so, to ward
off this new threat, the British plunged deeper and deeper into Asia:
two wars against the Sikhs ended in the annexation of the Punjab,
protracted warfare against the Afghans resulted at least in a neu-
tralization of Afghanistan as a bastion against Russian progress, and
the conquest of Sind followed. By now, the British had overcome all
pangs of conscience; they conquered, and went on conquering, and
enjoyed it. Sir Charles Napier summarized this new attitude very
neatly when he wrote: "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall
do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it
will be."[5] Other pieces of rascality followed: two wars against the
Burmese, in the east, gave the British full control of the Bay of
Bengal.

This happy imperial extension was temporarily marred by the for-
midable Mutiny of 1857; the very failure of the Mutiny was inter-
esting and significant: it was a reaction toward the past rather than
a leap forward, an attempt to undo the inevitable Westernization of
India, a blind, furious reaction rather than a national war of inde-
pendence; it had no leadership, was technically deficient, had only
limited support among the civilian population, and failed to sway
Britain's many loyal allies (Sir Dinkar Rāo of Gwālior, Sir Salar
Jang of Hyderābād, Jang Bahādur of Nepal, the Sikhs and even the
friendly neutral Afghans of Dost Muhammad). The Mutiny failed
but it had far-reaching effects on the British administration of India.
It was a dramatic watershed between the old India and the modern
one: control of the Indian government passed from the hands of the
Company to those of the Crown; the army was entirely reorganized;
and the states were fully brought under British paramountcy. But
the most important result was to create a chasm of tremendous ill

feeling between many Indians and many distrustful, infuriated British, a chasm that was never really closed again. From now on, the social aloofness of the British in India became legendary and the British rulers became a new super-caste imposed on top of the existing caste structure, as rigidly exclusive as any native caste: they became the super-Brāhmins in charge of government and administration.

Conquering an empire is one thing; administering it is another and perhaps more difficult thing. The British learned this in the early days in Bengal. Gradually and imperceptibly, they brought the entire administration of this province under full control, deliberately excluding the Indians from any offices involving trust and responsibility. Now, quite determined to strengthen their imperial hold on India, the British made sure that no Indian could rise to power and influence in British India, especially in that branch of the imperial structure that was its mainstay: the army. Victor Jacquemont, an eyewitness at the time, claimed that "In every company there are two or three native officers who, when they are too good, are discharged from the service . . . on the pretext of rewarding them. . . . So soon as the sepoys become attached to them, so soon as they encroach upon the admiration and respect which must be the exclusive property of European officers, they are immediately discharged."[6]

The major problem, at first, was collecting the land revenue; but as the British possessions grew in size, every other aspect of direct administration had also to be considered. And one by one, the systems of taxation, law, justice had to be harmonized with existing traditions and customs varying from one part of India to another. Countless British officials and experts labored to put together an impressive administrative machine with precise functions and codes, the first unifying cement in a land that had been split and divided time and again during its long history.

But certainly the most important feature of this whole period was economic. The brutal fact is that during the first hundred years of British rule, India's flourishing industry and trade collapsed. A country such as Bengal, for instance, was so industrious that three-fourths of its imports during the first half of the eighteenth century consisted of gold in payment for its exports: silk, cotton, salt, sugar, jute and opium; Bengal's external trade extended to the Red Sea and Persian

Gulf, Africa, Malaya and China. But when the British took over the *Diwāni* in 1765, everything was reversed: all surplus revenue went into the purchase of Bengali goods for export to Britain until 1780. Added to the fantastic plunder of many officers of the Company, the financial drain was of the order of thirty-eight million pounds sterling from 1757 to 1780, an enormous sum for the times. The complete monopoly of the Company extended to Bengal's inland trade and ruined the Indian merchants; soon the Indian weavers were compelled to provide the Company with enormous quantities of material at prices that were not only much lower than the current market price, but often were below the cost of the required raw material. And to crown it all, the resentment of British manufacturers was such that laws were passed in Britain forbidding the import of Indian silk and cotton goods—which then were sold at enormous profit on the European continent.

A strange thing then happened. The tremendous influx of liquid funds into Britain became capital available for investment; and artificial restrictions of imports by legislation gave a great impulse to Britain's cotton industry. These two financial and economic circumstances, joined together, provided the material setting for a momentous event: the Industrial Revolution. British ingenuity was considerable in those days, and it literally exploded in the latter part of the eighteenth century: in 1760 the flying shuttle had been invented, and in 1764 Hargreaves had put together the spinning jenny; in 1768 Watt built the first steam engine; coal began to replace wood in smelting; in 1776 Compton devised the "mule"; in 1785 Cartwright invented the power loom—and the conjunction of all these factors brought on the greatest and swiftest economic revolution in man's history. And behind it all lay the plunder of Bengal.

This revolution next turned on Bengal with a vengeance. As a result of all these discoveries, the great technical improvement in British manufacturing had already enabled the conquerors to undersell Indian cotton goods on the British market as early as 1788. What had been deadly Indian competition twenty years earlier became laughable weakness. Then started the policy of importing raw materials from India, processing them in Manchester and re-exporting the manufactured product back to India's immense consuming markets. And no attempt was ever made to protect Bengal's cotton industry against this new competition; it went to its doom, unlamented by Bengal's new overlords. Flourishing industries were ruined; trade

collapsed or passed into British hands; the Indian commercial class was liquidated and the impoverished proletariat of Bengal went back to the land and agriculture.

What happened in Bengal happened more or less throughout India. Even under the Moghuls, India had been a great industrial country; its manufacturing wealth and power went as far back as the Mauryas; and its progress had continued steadily, in spite of political chaos, during the first hundreds of years of European presence on the coasts. Until the eighteenth century, the two-thousand-year-old complaint of Pliny was still valid: the West was drained of all its gold because the imports of all the luxuries grown or manufactured in India could never be compensated for by the West's small exports to India. And suddenly, in almost no time, one of the great economic constants that spanned the rise and fall of several Civilizations was completely reversed in one of the most dramatic revolutions known to history. Time after time, while the innocent British economists of the Adam Smith school proclaimed the virtues of free trade and free enterprise, Britain's government crushed one Indian industry after another by exposing it naked to the rising power of the new machine industry; India became a new fount of wealth, one of a type undreamed of before: it became an immense protected market for Britain's nascent industry, as well as a source of supply of cheap raw materials. Britain's industrial might stood unchallenged under the most auspicious circumstances that history ever offered to a single nation. Meanwhile, famine stalked the land and Governor General Lord Bentinck himself stated in 1834 that "the misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India."[7]

Now, for the first time, India's great Civilization—with all the urban, city-life economy and industry that are implied by the very expression "Civilization"—that had survived more than two thousand years, was partly collapsing. India experienced a gradual *ruralization* throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a ruralization that actually impoverished a people who, on the whole, had been relatively prosperous. Political unity was purchased at the heavy cost of economic distress; and many of the economic problems that burden contemporary India can be traced back to Britain's disastrous colonial policy. But that was the price paid by India for its lack of political acumen; quite unwittingly, the British struck the Achilles' heel of Indian Civilization and brought the Indian giant

down to its knees. And through their new-found political power, they were able to carry out a profound social transformation through a re-distribution of economic power. Nothing sums up better this impact of the British than the words spoken by the historian Montgomery Martin before a committee of Parliament in 1840: "India is as much a manufacturing country as an agriculturist; and he who seeks to reduce her to the position of an agricultural country, seeks to lower her in the scale of civilization."[8] Yet, this is actually what happened all through the nineteenth century. And the entire history of modern India has to be seen under the light of this "lowering" of her ancient Civilization.

The impact of the British—that is, of a Western Culture in its last phase of historical development, the individualistic-capitalistic one— had grave consequences in India. It did not really affect the political life of the land, since Indian Civilization had stopped contributing anything to political reality and theory for over two thousand years. Following in the footsteps of the disintegrating Moghuls, the British were driven to *create* an entirely new Indian polity, and this creation itself was the most notable, most positive achievement of the British. But the social impact of British domination was wholly negative and destructive, since it struck down the most precious creation of Indian Civilization, one that had endured thousands of years, including centuries of alien Muslim rule.

Indian society rested on three principal pillars: the caste system, the joint family system (whereby ownership was not individual but collective for the benefit of the clannish family) and the autonomous village community. These village communities were, in the words coined by Sir Charles Metcalfe in 1830, "little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves; and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself . . . is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."[9] Along with the autonomous castes, these communities were largely self-ruled, and, for thousands of years, the only impact of *political* power on them was manifested by payment of taxes (usually between a quarter and a third of the gross produce).

The British impact destroyed this socioeconomic structure—not only through the virtual annihilation of Indian industry and the In-

dian middle classes, but also through a complete metamorphosis of landownership. In a country that no longer knew landlordism, as it existed in the pre-Buddhist days of Indian Culture, the British introduced the alien European concepts of landownership. The native co-operative groups, the corporate character of the autonomous communities disintegrated. All this was the result of what came to be known as the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, Bihār, Orissa and the Benares Province. Until the advent of the British, Indian Law recognized no freeholders; theoretically, all landownership was vested in the state; in practice, it amounted to communal ownership, not so much of the land as of the produce. So long as "land revenue" was paid to the political authority in charge at customary rates, there was no trouble. The land revenue was collected by government officials or tax-farmers direct from the village communities, a workable arrangement that had lasted thousands of years and was not unduly oppressive.

Into this dual relationship between state and farmers, organized co-operatively in their village *panchāyats,* the British introduced a third element through the creation of "proprietary rights" in favor of a new class of middlemen, known as *zamindārs,* who set themselves up between the British and the Indian farmers. Originally removable middlemen who merely collected land revenue, the *zamindārs,* taking advantage of political chaos, were in the process of becoming hereditary landowners. Before their advent in the eighteenth century, the whole produce of the land was shared between the farmer (*raiyat,* or *ryot*) and the state (*sarkār*); the collecting middlemen were allowed by Emperor Akbar, for instance, an interest 2½ per cent; and it was in the interest of whatever political power was in control of the state that the middlemen should not oppress the farmers. Political disintegration, however, had freed these middlemen from state control, leaving them free to fight the powerful village communities. It is likely that they would not have been victorious had it not been for the collapse of Indian industrial power under British pressure. As it was, deprived of the customary protection of the state, and dealt a deathblow by economic discrimination, the village communities caved in.

The British chose to institutionalize this increasing disorder, instead of restoring the traditional social equilibrium. Translating the Persian expression *bandobast* (meaning the government's share of the land revenue) into "Settlement," the British decided that the

easiest way to handle the situation would be to create a new class of powerful landowners who would, like their British counterparts, prove to be progressive-minded. The main advocate of the Permanent Settlement, Lord Cornwallis, stated his opinion that "nothing could be so ruinous to the public interest as that the land should be retained as the property of Government"[10] and decided, in agreement with the Company Directors, to hand over ownership to the greedy *zamindārs*.

This piece of folly ignored the established rights of multitudes of under-proprietors, the customary tenant rights of the *raiyats* and especially their right to fair customary rates. It ignored the fact that it amounted to an agrarian revolution in reverse; that the *zamindārs* had never had and still had no intention of spending capital on land improvement but would become absentee landowners; that the farmers had no protection against the greed of their new landlords and thus could no longer improve the land themselves (which is what they had always done in the past). It further upset the traditional pattern by substituting for the accepted forms of personal coercion (imprisonment) for defaulting debtors, the actual selling out of the property—a far more cruel form of oppression than anything known hitherto because it was wholly alien to the Indian way of thinking. And as a result, most of the old traditional potentates were utterly ruined (the Rājahs of Dīnājpur, Rājshāhi, Bishanpur, Cossījurah and countless others), and their places were taken by grasping moneylenders and speculators who displayed a ferocious disregard for all the traditional rights of the farmers. The result was sheer disaster, and areas such as Bengal have not yet recovered from it.

Disastrous though it was, the British clung to this policy because of the advantage of having a class of powerful landowners wholly devoted to the imperialism that had made them what they were in the first place. Added to the loyal princes who were left in possession of their truncated states, they formed a more or less compact group of Indians who controlled masses of other Indians for the benefit of the British ruling power, thus relieving the latter of the burden of direct rule and administration. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British Empire in India was as solidly based as it ever was to be. Its minor weaknesses were corrected after the Great Mutiny of 1857, and for generations there were no Indians who questioned the necessity of British rule in India, even if they formulated some criticisms on minor matters.

XIII

India and the Colonial World

EUROPEAN expansion struck at the East as a whole and, with a few negligible exceptions, made itself felt in every part of Asia. But out of the whole of Asia, a large section was set apart by historical destiny for a direct colonial rule of Europe that has had few equivalents at any other time. The colonial world that was destined to fall for a time under the iron heel of the European conquerors, administrators, planters and traders differed in many ways from the rest of an Asia that rebelled at such complete surrender of itself: it was more properly the "Orient," the tropical and equatorial regions where vast and rich lands spread out in a warm and humid climate, mostly maritime; the natural wealth of the soil and the boundless vitality of nature were usually debilitating for the human dwellers, conducive to laziness, softening. Time and again, these areas had been invaded by northerners, more properly "Asiatics" who burst out of the Central Asian wastes to conquer and plunder and finally bask in the luxurious warmth of the southern Orient.

Hardier people like the Turks, Iranians, Afghans, and the Far Easterners (Chinese, Koreans, Japanese) offered too much resistance ever to fall completely under the political and administrative sway of a particular European power. More vigorous and determined than their southern neighbors, they all resisted stubbornly any overt encroachment on their political independence; they often suffered from economic domination but never accepted the fullfledged administrative control that European colonialism automatically entailed. Cutting across all classification based on languages, religions and races, colonial domination clamped down on the easy preys which always lie between the tropics and the equator: India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Indochina, Indonesia, with a few buffer states such as Thailand, the indirect beneficiary of rivalries between various Eu-

ropean powers. But it is a fact, also, that almost all these lands had been earlier civilized by an expansive India, and that most of their general attitude and world-outlook was borrowed from Indian Civilization. They could hardly escape the fate that befell India, their mother country.

Against this type of tropical colonialism, the Asian expansion of Russia and Japan presented an entirely different picture; they were more in the nature of the natural outbreathing of Asian powers expanding by osmosis on contiguous soil within the limits of their own continental spheres. Russian expansion in Siberia and Central Asia was not so much a colonial venture as the massive growth of a land-bound population overflowing quite naturally into the relatively empty spaces of the immense continent. Japan's forays into Korea or Formosa were more comparable to Britain's domination over Ireland or Austria's over Bohemia than to the uncanny *action-at-distance* that characterized a European colonization striking across vast or unknown oceans, occupying and ruling territories at the other end of the earth.

For a long time, the very nature of the tropical Orient, soft, mild and easygoing, gave the impression that European political domination would endure for many centuries to come. And yet it is quite likely that when, a few hundred years from now, the historian will ponder the destiny of the European colonial empires in Asia, he will be struck by a feature which does not often strike us today: the exceedingly small duration of European colonial domination—of effective domination, that is—and by the remarkable speed with which it broke down. Many of these Oriental satrapies lasted less than a man's lifetime and the whole colonial drama represents nothing more than the twinkling of an eye under any cosmic time reckoning. But, immersed in the arduous task of putting an end to this dynamic period of European expansion, we tend today to overlook the more fundamental aspects of this historic impact of Europe on the tropical East.

The outstanding characteristic of the colonial world as it stood throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the overwhelming importance of India in the whole scheme of European imperialism, within and without the British Empire. India, with its great resources, hundreds of millions of human beings and high standards of civilization, weighed twice as much as all the other colonies put together. In order to protect themselves on the Indian sub-

continent, the British had been driven to conquer the whole of it. Then, in order to protect the whole, the British were driven to absorb its neighbors—Ceylon, Burma, some Himalayan states, the northwestern home of the Pathāns and Baluchistan—and also to send military expeditions to Afghanistan and Tibet and bring them within the British sphere of influence. And in order to protect this whole political complex, the British were driven to occupy a great deal of the coast of Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and exert paramount influence in the southern half of Persia. And then, creeping down the east coast of Africa, they occupied Zanzibar and its African hinterland, and established themselves securely in South Africa in order to protect one of the routes to India. In the east, they took over Malaya and Singapore, and some parts of Borneo, the whole of it anchored to the immense continent of Australia. Before anyone realized it, the vast Indian Ocean itself had become a British lake enclosed within the steely triangle of South Africa, India and Australia. Then the approaches to the Indian Ocean had to be guarded: the British clung tenaciously to Gibraltar and Malta, acquired Cyprus and took over Egypt and control of the Suez Canal. Thus does the logic of unconscious, often involuntary imperialism work. The central position of India in this whole scheme was so well acknowledged that most consular and many diplomatic posts in the Orient were staffed by and financed by British India, and that even a distant Arabian colony like Aden was administered by India.

All the other colonial empires were small-scale replicas of this gigantic empire, small appendices to the main one—French Indochina and the prosperous Dutch East Indies, decadent Portuguese Goa and wild Portuguese Mozambique, all of which depended entirely on the good will of Britain's global control of the seas and oceans for communication with their mother countries. To all who were not entirely blind, it was obvious that India set the pace of the colonial evolution and that if ever the keystone of the colonial structure was removed, all the satellite empires would inevitably fall away.

The clamping of direct colonial rule on the tropical Orient resulted in a growing distortion between the material benefits conferred (peace and order, smooth technical progress) and the human degradation that was inflicted on the colonized populations. The material benefits were unquestionable, once the ugly beginnings in Bengal were left behind. Peace and stability were rigorously preserved in vast areas that, for long, had known only political chaos. Economic

progress, even if it was aimed largely at the benefit of the imperial and colonizing power, was incomparably greater than in the semi-free countries of Asia—with the exception of "Moonlight" Japan, which is in a class apart. It is striking, for instance, that by 1909, India had more than 31,000 miles of railroads, while a larger sub-continent such as China had only 3,000. But then every mile of line in India was built under government guarantee and was almost entirely financed with British capital. By 1909, the Indian irrigation system with its countless dams, canals and sluices was the largest in the world and irrigated twenty-three million acres of land. Famines were not entirely overcome, but disasters such as the great Bengal famine of 1770 or the Orissa famine in 1866—when in both cases between a third to a quarter of the whole population died—could no longer occur. Health and sanitation improved to such an extent that population figures jumped dramatically: India's population increased from a hundred million to four hundred million in little over a century, Java's from three million to fifty million in about the same time.

But alongside this undoubted material progress (paid for in part by the ruin and economic dislocation of native industries) the old political forms were often preserved artificially, almost petrified by the iron rule of the colonizing power. Because trade and commerce had been the original incentives of European imperialism, the subsequent political and administrative commitments devolved on Europeans more by accident than design. The easiest way out of such administrative burdens was to foster indirect rule as far as possible, and since there was no real desire to Westernize the colonized Asians, their traditional way of life was preserved to the extent that was compatible with a profitable exploitation of their resources. Of course, there were exceptions. Having tasted outright imperialism, some British proconsuls began to thirst for more direct rule rather than less. Lord Dalhousie was a case in point; under his governor-generalship, an alarming number of princes had been dispossessed (notably the King of Oudh), some twenty thousand estates had been confiscated in the Deccan, and large sections of the population were alarmed at the rapid expansion of railroads and telegraph lines, Western education, the abolition of traditional practices such as the burning of widows (*satī*) and infanticide, and countless other interferences with their traditional way of life during the first half of the nineteenth century. The result was the Great Mutiny of 1857, a typi-

cally "old-fashioned" rebellion that wanted to turn the clock back, not move it forward.

The Great Mutiny in India, and other similar rebellions in lesser colonies, taught the colonizing British, and other colonizing Europeans, a lesson: and that was to move slowly as far as social reforms were concerned. Soon after the Great Mutiny, Dalhousie's nefarious policy of not recognizing princely adoption as valid, for instance, and taking over the states where there were no male heirs, was promptly discarded. A proclamation of Queen Victoria stated that no state would be taken over for trivial motives from now on, and the status of 600-odd Indian states was frozen for almost a century. And so it was that Indian Maharajahs and Nawabs, Malay and Indonesian Sultans, Indochinese kings and emperors, all continued in odd corners of the colonial world to perpetuate a style of life and preserve a social structure that were becoming increasingly incongruous, in fact soon quite incompatible, with the requirements of the dawning Industrial Age, if nothing else. European influence interfered as little as possible with the customary life of its colonial subjects, but weakened and corrupted the former ruling elements who were now deprived of their real work, trials, dangers and responsibilities without which men cannot possibly be men. Instead of strong and loyal allies, the Europeans soon found themselves tied to inconsequential weaklings, subservient vassals who became estranged from their own people and thrown out of the mainstream of history.

Under the benevolent protection of colonial powers anxious to preserve a political *status quo* which was often a guarantee of submission at minimum costs—as well as of practical impotence, thanks to the fetters of cumbersome traditions—native rulers and local aristocracies preserved a way of life that was often tinged with boundless charm but became increasingly anachronistic. Dangerous distortions grew as a result of this artificial freezing. Princes and rulers could perpetuate their traditional rule for some generations, but threats to their outdated rule began to loom large; the greatest threat of all was neither the democratic aspirations of their states' small intelligentsia nor the thirst of the farmers for land reform, nor the discontent of some industrial proletariat, although all these existed and had to be reckoned with. The real threat was the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the gradual devaluation and then collapse of all the traditional *symbols* on which their prestige rested. So long as the structure of the old civilizations remained shielded from the

violent tornadoes of the external world by colonial protection, these amazing styles of living could prolong their existence artificially. But when the colonial shield was withdrawn, these propped-up societies crumpled like so many moth-eaten structures. Time then took its toll, not gently and gradually, but violently. They had been purposely removed from the rapid current of modern history, had remained unchanged for generations during the Victorian era of Europe, and for some time after. But when the fresh air was at last allowed to blow into these hothouses, the old fossilized civilizations they still represented withered away—and are still withering away under our eyes today.

European colonization resembled the colonization of many other Cultures in their expansive phase; but it also contained some absolutely unprecedented features. When Europe threw its colonial mantle over the Asian tropics, it established in these warm lands a type of rule that was entirely novel in the historical experience of the Orient. Hitherto, conquerors had imposed their iron grip, roaming tribes and seafaring warriors had knocked down established states, building for themselves mighty empires, trampling underfoot the conquered and subjugated people without moral qualms. But they usually remained in the conquered land, to be absorbed after a few generations and become part of the native population, often as an increment of strength and virility. India, like China, always managed to absorb and make part of herself all her conquerors.

The unique experience of the European colonial empires consisted in carving out Asian territories that were ruled from totally inaccessible centers situated many thousands of miles beyond oceans that had never been sailed upon by Indians or Indochinese or Indonesians. Small European nations established their rule in these far-distant lands and set up a complete apparatus of imperial rule, rotating their white soldiers and administrators so that they would not fall prey to the debilitating climates and weakening blood of tropical people. It was an entirely new and overwhelming experience for the Asians. The mysterious centers of power were at the other end of the earth, sources of inexhaustible military strength, administrative skill and technical ingenuity, holding their conquered territories in tighter, because more efficient, bondage than they had ever experienced in history. The action-at-distance of European consciousness had never found a more potent materialization, and never had such

imperialistic rule seemed more unassailable and invulnerable. This was a form of political slavery that had never been dreamed of before and that was intensely cruel in its psychological consequences. The proud sultans of Indonesia submitted to regulations promulgated at the Hague while the Emperor of Annam had his fate sealed by a bureaucrat in Paris. Hundreds of millions of Indians depended on decisions made in London. Even Time, India's mysterious and all-powerful *Kāla,* that devastating weapon which had wrestled with and ultimately defeated every Asian Civilization, paralyzed their evolution and stultified their growth, annihilated every conqueror and imperial ruler—even Time seemed to be powerless against those uncanny Europeans who had mastered it, divided it, calculated its intervals and finally chained it to their precise, inhuman chronometers. Some magic, some fabulous charm seemed to protect and bolster a European power that would endure until a new cosmic cycle (*kalpa*) came about.

A great deal of Europe's colonizing power was due to the inherent spirit of European Culture; but a great deal more was due to Europe's technical mastery that sprang from the same spirit. The Industrial Revolution that was under way in Victorian days was shaping a new world of much vaster dimensions into which the Asian people were drawn as appendages, not as principals. It is a striking fact that before it took place late in the eighteenth century, the Europeans in India tended to adopt Indian customs and befriend Indians who lived on more or less the same technical level. But the Industrial Revolution gradually changed all this—and made colonialism eventually intolerable. Britain's technical progress had enslaved and then destroyed's India's traditional industries; steamships, the telegraph and other rapid means of communications brought Britain gradually nearer to India. The trend went on ceaselessly; faster liners and speedier railroads were supplemented by sea-to-sea canals, then by airplanes in the twentieth century; the telephone and submarine cables eventually overtook the old-fashioned telegraph.

This technological development had two important consequences: the growth of administrative and political centralization, and the development of a growing barrier between colonizers and colonized. Increasing centralization of administrative power resulted from the growing speed of communications between Britain and India. The British government and press paid greater attention to India and Indian affairs; simultaneously, the former independence of the colo-

nial proconsuls, on whose political acumen, judgment and strength of character the safety of the imperial possession depended, was progressively curtailed. Viceroys and governors became messenger boys, transmitting increasingly rigid orders from the home country's bureaucracy, waiting endlessly for instructions that came too late and having to suffer in silence the increasing involvement of ill-informed public opinions in the West. The era of Clive and Warren Hastings, of Raffles of Malaya and Cecil Rhodes of Africa, the era of bold and imaginative individuals, was coming to an end. The era of lesser yet notable proconsuls of the Cromer and Curzon type was opening. And if viceroys and governors found their independence of action curtailed, they in turn curtailed the independence of action of provincial authorities and district officers. European colonialism, inevitably, became less bearable as this growing centralization made its impact felt all the way down the line, to the lower echelons of the colonial administrations, subordinating on the one hand the colonies ever more tightly to the home country, and destroying on the other hand the humane, organic connection between ruler and ruled, blighting the autonomy they had enjoyed in former days. The colonized Asians no longer dealt with individual proconsuls so much as with remote and impersonal bureaucratic machineries.

But at the same time, a new set of barriers arose between colonizers and colonized that had never existed before. The gulf between white and colored races was great enough in the old days, but it was more the perennial gulf between conqueror and conquered than that between two entirely different species increasingly separated by the growth of industrial technological knowledge and facilities. Modernization made it easier for the Europeans to import their own style of life to Asia than to adapt themselves to local customs as their predecessors had in the old days. One more human link between East and West was being gradually severed as the colonizing whites took on the aspect of troops of occupation, camping with all their mechanical gadgets in climatically hostile territory. Segregation increased as Westerners conglomerated together in their exclusive clubs in which the only Orientals allowed were menservants. Increased facilities of communication with the mother country took away the tinge of exile that had formerly been part of the life of Europeans in Asia and loosened further the ties of the colonial Europeans with their adopted second home. As centralization had gradually dehumanized the far more humane government of former proconsuls, so

did a certain impersonal mechanization introduce itself into the relationship between Easterner and Westerner; it wiped out, for all its greater efficiency, justice and integrity, a great deal of the human warmth, respect and affection that they had hitherto felt for each other. Cold condescension and aloofness now replaced the more exhilarating social life in which colonizers and colonized used to mix freely. And also, from then on, individual officers and administrators became far more conscious of Britain's imperial mission, far more conscious that European colonialism was justified by Europe's unquestioned pre-eminence in all the arts and sciences, in political and military power and in the immense and constantly growing technical superiority due to the Industrial Revolution of which Europe was the leader.

The British brought to India something that India always lacked: the concept of the Indian state, of efficient administration, and of all-India unity in diversity. In individual Englishmen serving in India, the growing certainty and confidence often turned to arrogance; but everything has to be paid for and Britain conferred undoubted benefits on India. Such an innovation as the introduction of competitive examinations for the recruitment of India's British civil service in 1853 was far-reaching; advocated as early as 1813 by Lord Grenville, it was finally bestowed upon India long before it took effect in the mother country. In effect, it gave to India something China had provided for herself thousands of years ago: a mandarin system. It was a boon for India; but it was also a sign of the times in Britain proper; it signified the beginning of a more democratic system of recruitment that stressed ability rather than the advantages of birth and connections, in fact, the beginning of the decay of Britain's ruling aristocracy. The transition in India was not always easy, and the old British civil servants looked with a jaundiced eye upon the new "competition-wallah" whose bookish learning they despised. But it worked, and the famous Indian Civil Service came to be regarded as the best administrative structure in the world. It was also a symbol of the new historical phase through which the West itself was proceeding: the transition from Culture to Civilization. The I.C.S. was a Civilization-institution, the mechanical expression of a great legacy.

The zenith of colonialism, especially of British India, was the half century that followed the Great Mutiny of 1857. There was little

change during this period of unparalleled Victorian splendor, and it seemed to most Europeans that history itself had come to an end, that from now on nothing but economic prosperity was in sight and that Europe's pre-eminence would endure forever. A few skirmishes around India—the Second Afghan War, the conquest of Upper Burma and an expedition to Tibet—were merely polishing the great imperial job. The Indian princes were more secure on their thrones than they had been before the Mutiny, but also more closely supervised by the viceroy. Timid approaches were made toward associating Indians with the government of their own country: the enlargements of the Legislative Councils in 1893 and Lord Ripon's Local Self-Government Acts.

One of the odd consequences of colonial rule was that the ruling power was driven to establish a *de facto* state socialism in colonial lands at a time when unmitigated liberalism and governmental noninterference was the cardinal policy in the West. Even liberals like John Stuart Mill had to admit that it had to be so in India, without anticipating that one day the socialistic impulse would come home to Europe to roost. But the most liberal British viceroy, entrusted with a greater effective power than the Moghul Emperors ever had, soon acquired a taste for power for the sheer sake of it and enjoyed the Indian state socialism of which he was the head, which he would have abhorred at home in Britain. He fitted by instinct into the great Indian structure as head of a new super-caste, that caste that India had psychologically castrated when its Civilization became established, the political one. The British provided this caste of rulers and administrators, who did the dirty political work that few Brāhmins would ever condescend to do. Simultaneously, its viceregal head represented another powerful group: he was a representative of Britain's ruling class, a member of Britain's many-sided aristocracy, who spent only a small part of his time in India and would be called upon to the governor-generalship of Canada or Australia, or to head the Bank of England or become a director of various British corporations. But so long as he was in India, he supervised efficiently the workings of the Platonic British super-caste whose members were forbidden to own land in India or engage in business, whose only reward was power and prestige and whose only animating spirit was devotion to the public good.

Members of this super-caste, in contrast with the viceroys and governors recruited from among the ranks of Britain's aristocracy,

usually spent their whole lives in India and were often born in India. Quite naturally, they became infected with the prevailing spirit of India, its customs and outlook on life. The whole system worked well because the British found in India certain characteristic attitudes that reflected their own, especially the caste idea and the undemocratic aloofness of men who came from widely different backgrounds. The tremendous social differentiation separating Britain's aristocratic ruling class from the rest of the British population found its echo even in India. And it was not long before the Indians themselves saw the difference. Victor Jacquemont, who traveled throughout India in the early 1830's, pointed out that Indians "have two expressions only to mention a European. A *saheb logue*, a lord or gentleman . . . and a *gora logue* . . . a white man. The former character is much respected by them; the latter may be dreaded, as it is indeed very often quite dreadful, but respected never."[1] This aristocratic character of British society stamped its features on the British Empire and accommodated itself quite naturally with India's caste system.

Yet even the British were puzzled by the extremes to which the caste principle could go in India; in times of famine, for instance, they would find able-bodied Brāhmins dying of starvation because they refused to work on some public utilities with members of other castes. On the whole, however, the system worked superbly well; rulers and ruled remained in their appointed places and the clashes were few. The British were not loved, but they were at all times respected. The workability of the system sprang from the fact that it was not yet *mechanical*, but still *organic*: it remained organic so long as the Indians remained Indians and the Englishmen remained Englishmen; they were so completely different in background and outlook that they got on very well together because they performed different but complementary tasks. Between such different men, separated by such tremendous barriers, there was no dealing on equal terms but only on complementary terms; the British agreed to perform certain unpleasant political and administrative functions, and the Brāhmins agreed to tolerate them in exchange for a certain remuneration. It is only when the Indians became increasingly Westernized that the organic character of the system disappeared, and that all the strains of a rusty mechanical structure began to develop. Then clashes began to occur because Indians were beginning to meet the British on their own level, in their own language, and expected to be judged according to their own British standards, that is, the

standards of a competitive society that had always been alien to India.

The aristocratic character of British society also resulted in another marked feature that was absent from French or Dutch colonialism: the ability to delegate power, which tends to disappear in a more democratic, and consequently bureaucratic, society. Jacquemont noticed with amazement that there was only one Englishman where there would have been twenty Frenchmen to perform the same job.[2] More than at home in Britain, and more than in the British armed forces in India, the civil administration of India was conducted along the lines of delegation of power. British district officers were entrusted with huge territories and immense populations, and were left largely to their own devices; they ruled as minor potentates with full powers. And under them, Indian *tahsildars* (sub-inspectors of police) were in turn endowed with considerable discretionary powers and lived alone in their small realms, far from any Englishmen, free to use their judgments in most cases without having to refer to their superiors.

The whole structure, the colonial world as such, the prestige of the Europeans throughout the Orient and the Indian Empire in particular, all culminated in the beginning of the twentieth century, around 1906. From then on, they all began a precipitous decline that is not yet ended. The Victorian era was the swan song of Europe's pre-eminence in the world; India in the Victorian scheme was Kipling's India, a highly romantic blend of the Orient as seen from the West, colorful princes of the Arabian Nights, mysterious jungles and high-minded proconsuls. Few Westerners paid any attention to the new India that was rising from below, or if they saw it coming, they closed their eyes. The last great proconsul of the old type was Lord Curzon who, as Viceroy of India, cut a formidable figure (even though he was frequently overruled by Whitehall). His rule marked the zenith of the great Anglo-Indian Empire whose material prosperity was far ahead of any other country in Asia (again, with the exception of Japan), where peace and security prevailed at a time when most of the free countries of Asia were in the throes of economic difficulties and political troubles.

Lord Curzon presided over the Great Durbar of 1903, quite confident that it symbolized the enduring stability of the British Empire, whereas, in fact, it symbolized the beginning of the end. But every-

one at the time shared Lord Curzon's optimism; the magnificent
pomp and circumstance of the Durbar, mingling Oriental splendor
and British majesty; the State Procession from Delhi's Red Fort to
the Great Mosque; the awesome parade of the Indian army and
the ruling maharajahs and nawabs surrounding the howdah in
which sat His Excellency Lord Curzon, followed by over fifty stately
elephants covered with cloth of gold—the gorgeous spectacle was a
feast for any eye. Yet it was close to a historical twilight; the early,
crude merchants of the East India Company had come a long way
in three hundred years and now sat on the very throne of the Great
Moghuls; but they had another way to go now, shorter and in the
opposite direction. They might have guessed what the future held in
store when, with unconscious symbolism, Lord Curzon prohibited
the famous hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers," not because it would
be out of place in Hindu-Muslim India, but because it contained
the following lines: "Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms
rise and wane . . ."—those words, words of Christian faith, had
an unpleasant ring in the ears of Victorian men, who thought that
history had come to an end.

The Awakening of India

HISTORY has never known anything quite comparable to the Anglo-Indian Empire. Essentially practical and intuitive, endowed with a wonderful political flair for reaching the desired results at minimum cost and trouble, the empirical British organized their vast realm without thought of logical divisions: the Anglo-Indian Empire was not planned or thought out; it just happened. It was an organic growth, and until the later stages of its development, an unconscious one at that. Psychologically alien and remote from Indian ways of thought, as completely divorced from the uncanny and mysterious atmosphere of the conquered land as any ruling oligarchy could ever be and has ever been in the past—and therefore free from the danger of gradual assimilation—the slow-moving, stubborn and tenacious British finally clamped on India a strikingly efficient administration. What had started out centuries before under the auspices of the East India Company as a strictly commercial venture, ended up under the Victorians as a God-ordained imperialism. True Protestants with that special touch of Puritanism which pervades their political and economic thinking, with a Calvinistic faith in their predestined role as "civilizers" of the "heathen" world (an attitude which they often adopted when facing continental Europe) the British landed in India in the most *catholic* country on the surface of the globe. Had they been mere Puritans, they would have floundered in the maze of complexities of India. But Britain had been able, through her genius for happy compromise, to preserve an aristocratic rule of the first order which endowed her upper classes with all the prestige, self-assurance, dignity and political acumen that had been bestowed two thousand years before on Roman senators.

Yet, although this essentially aristocratic character of British imperialism—a great contrast with the essentially bourgeois or rather

middle-class tone of latter-day French and Dutch colonization—
softened the blow of violent contrast between a Protestant West and
a catholic East, it did not do away with it altogether. The former
Muslim overlords, these "Protestants" of another age, had not been
able to preserve their separate identity for long and had been soon
overwhelmed by the climate and general atmosphere of Hindustan,
especially when fresh blood was no longer forthcoming from Central
Asia. Their imperial power was forever broken when they vainly
attempted to react against Indian cultural assimilation in the days of
Aurangzeb. The Roman Catholic Portuguese had been similarly ab-
sorbed by Goa's tropical atmosphere. But not so the British. The
most intelligent Indians were profoundly puzzled at the sight of this
enduring empire whose heart was located beyond many seas at the
other end of the earth, and kept pumping new blood into the im-
perial arteries so as to avoid a fatal dilution. It was not so much the
material, economic and political success of the empire as the obvious
self-assurance and cool attitude of predestined superiority assumed
by the British that stunned the Indians.

It was no wonder, however, that while the dynamic British organ-
ized with remarkable efficiency the whole banking system, the new
transportation network by rail and road, the extraction of minerals,
the erection of power plants, the building of dams and digging of
irrigation canals, the Indian world went on weaving its endless and
purposeless dreams, apparently undisturbed by this Western impact.
Thanks to its political subservience to the most advanced European
power of the time, India's contact with the dawning Industrial Age
was never as brutal as was the case with China or Japan, for in-
stance. It crept up on India slowly and quietly, through British chan-
nels and under British supervision, fitting itself into India's traditional
pattern of life without needless tremors (except for the ruin of many
native industries and for the Great Mutiny), adapting itself to local
customs and prejudices without upsetting the cultural framework of
the vast subcontinent. One of the reasons for this smooth evolution
was simply that the center of gravity of India's enduring culture lay
far beyond mere political and economic contingencies, that mere
physical metamorphosis could not touch its essential spirit, which
dwelt in regions apparently out of reach to alien influences.

But while the more concrete-minded, practical people of the Far
East felt the physical impact of Western power with agonizing acuity
in the nineteenth century, the Indians felt the cultural impact with

the same agonizing acuity, only much earlier. Everything in those days conspired to overwhelm the thoughtful Asians with a sense of the absolute superiority of the West: its complete monopoly of scientific knowledge in basic research as well as in technological application, the exuberant artistic creations, the vigorous literature, the dynamic outlook on life that contrasted so sharply with the complete stagnation that had ossified Asia's old Civilizations. There was no possible attitude in the early part of the nineteenth century except acceptance of the absolute superiority of the West. These farsighted Indians who started the process of India's awakening could and did only aim at full integration of India in the global structure of the West.

Awakening can only take place on the plane on which consciousness still dwells. This explains that the most powerful agent of metamorphosis in depth could only be the profound philosophic bent and religious feeling which is so much part of India that its disappearance would destroy the very soul of that great country. It was all at once a tremendous boon to have a center of gravity so placed that it could not be harmed by the challenge of an alien civilization, and a weakness to have as sole unifying agent a colossal, protoplasmic and leaderless religion such as Hinduism—which bridged the gaps between castes, climates, languages, ways of life and psychological tempers, but had failed really to include all Indians in its petrified caste structure. And it was this very unifying agent, the only one that was native to India, that was bitterly challenged in the twentieth century by the Indian Muslims and led to their secession.

Many centuries of alien domination had all but wiped out the old political structures of a once-free India and had, by the same token, wiped from India's memory—but not its atavism—the great political science so carefully elaborated in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. Complete amoral realism and ruthless cynicism, as enjoined by political theory and as practiced only too often, had blighted the disunified Hindu world and had considerably eased the path of foreign conquerors. The soul of India had withdrawn into its innermost shell, away from a political and historical world whose control had slipped out of its hands because of the very contempt it had felt for it. Hindu amoral cynicism had been crushed by the bloody and cruel conquest of Islam and definitely wiped out by the steely efficiency of its British successors. Nothing lived now in India's moribund body save the flickering light of spiritual faith; and it was this flickering light, link-

ing a dead past to an unknown future, that was at the origin of the awakening.

The vast structure of Hinduism enfolded everything, from the most abstruse philosophies to the most emotional forms of religion. As was only natural, the awakening took two different but complementary aspects: an awakening of the head, first of all, and then an awakening of the heart—corresponding respectively to the two revolutionary activities of Rāmmohun Roy and Rāmakrishna. The keynote in both cases, philosophically and religiously, intellectually and emotionally, was *synthesis,* the required agent of a fusion between East and West that was so much more congenial than any other to the Indian soul because Hinduism itself was essentially synthetic. The geographical location of these two great awakenings was Bengal. After all, Bengal was, by a long stretch, the first compact portion of India to fall entirely under the direct domination of Britain, and it was only natural that India's intellectual and emotional awakening should take place in the sweltering heat of its broad plains against the formidable background of the Himalayas—an area where an emotional people of volcanic temper experienced the longest spell of alien domination and were exposed to the immediate impact of Western Culture even before the start of the Industrial Revolution.

The awakening of the Indian head took place under the sign of a revival of *theism,* an attempted synthesis between Christian and Islamic monotheism on the one hand, and Indian pantheism and monism on the other. We know that as early as the *Vedas,* theistic tendencies manifested themselves alongside every other form of understanding of the Godhead; the *Baghavad Gītā* carried on the theistic torch and all the great Vaiṣṇava reformers of the twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries held it high. Rāmānuja and his successors Madhva, Vallabha and Caitanya all insisted on the existence of an Almighty Maker and Preserver of all things, yet distinct from the human soul and from the material world as well: that was Viṣṇu, one of the aspects of Brahman. But Hindu theism ran counter to the main *monistic* trend of the Advaita Vedānta and could never be justified intellectually; it was an intuitive awareness of the unsatisfactory nature of absolute monism; but given the basic premises of India's *ahistorical* outlook, there could be no real intellectual justification for it.

Yet the theistic position was considerably bolstered by the advent

of Islam and the efforts to find a common ground between such
widely different religions. Synthesis was attempted on a grand scale
by Kabir and by Nānak, the founder of the Sikhs, but failed. Govind,
the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, made a religious reconciliation impossi-
ble by transforming Sikhism into a distinct creed, bitterly hostile to
Islam and ruthlessly persecuted by Aurangzeb. In spite of the decline
of Moghul power after Aurangzeb, Islam made further progress as
a *faith,* if not as a political power, increased the number of conver-
sions to the Muslim creed and bitterly opposed the advance of Brit-
ish domination and the penetration of European Culture.

The Hindus, however, were far more open to the influence of
European Culture. The seeds of a synthetic disposition had been
sowed under the Moghuls and were now turned to good account in
favor of an attempted fusion between Hinduism and, no longer Is-
lam, but Christianity in its later West-European garb, that is, Protes-
tantism (we must not forget that Christianity as such had been
present on the coast of Malabar almost since the time of Jesus
Christ). The profound impulse for this came, not from a purely reli-
gious confrontation, but from an unconscious, instinctive desire on
the part of the most enlightened Hindus to grasp the secret of Eu-
rope's power, not just its material power, but the psychological ele-
ments that made the self-assured Europeans what they were. It was
the imperial and industrial power of the Europeans, the worldly
success of the Western conquerors, that shook the Hindu structure
more than anything else. And the promptitude of the awakening
sprang from the ever-present seeds sown, centuries ago, by Akbar's
unitarian efforts. Many of the Bengal leaders of this awakening be-
longed to families that were traditionally associated, under one form
or another, with Moghul power: Rāmmohun Roy belonged to a
family of Bengali Brāhmins who had been granted the hereditary
title of *roy* because of their enduring loyalty to the Moghuls; the
Tāgore family belonged to a special group of Brāhmin clans known
as *pirilis* because they had co-operated with the Muslims in Delhi,
and were therefore virtually outside the pale of orthodox Hinduism
because of their "treason." Now that Islamic power was in full de-
cline, they transferred their synthetizing efforts to a *rapprochement*
between Hinduism and Christianity.

The great awakening was launched by Rāmmohun Roy late in
the eighteenth century as a result of the diffusion of European ideas;
but from the start, the whole movement was vitiated by the fact

that, faithful to their instinct, the Hindus looked for the secret of Western success in Christianity, on the very eve of the decline of Christianity itself in Western Culture. They sought for the secret of Western success on a plane where it was no longer located. To this they added another distortion by the mere fact that they were unable to grasp the Western conception of history. They instinctively sought for a religious fusion on a *spatial* plane, where fusion is impossible because it is the very domain of plurality; not *fusion* but only *co-existence* can rule on such a plane (a nutshell description of the historical life of Hinduism itself). It is this second distortion that will concern us first, because in terms of chronology it showed up first.

Rāmmohun Roy's fantastic knowledge and amazing life symbolized this very synthesis for which he labored all his life: steeped in both Hindu and Muslim cultures, fluent in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, English, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, expelled for a time by caste and family, having lived for years thereafter in Benares and Tibet, he finally returned home in 1796 and set about his life's work. Campaigning tirelessly against the monstrous distortions which centuries of sloth, corruption and inertia had inflicted on Hinduism (such as *sati,* the self-immolation of widows, which he finally persuaded the British authorities to ban), he tackled every social, political and cultural problem of his time. He was very clear-sighted as to the real nature of nationalism: "When we have to depend," said he, "by the very conditions of our existence on all things and all beings in nature, is not this fiery love of national independence a chimera? In society, individuals are constantly driven by their weakness to seek help from their neighbors, especially if the neighbors happen to be stronger than they; why, then, should a nation have the absurd pride of not depending on another? Conquest is very rarely an evil when the conquering people are more civilized than the conquered, because the former bring to the latter the benefits of civilization. India requires many more years of British domination. . . ."[1]

His attempted reform of Hinduism was based on his own highly controversial interpretation of the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads,* in which he saw an original, pure theism corrupted in following centuries by "idolatry": "It will also appear evident, that the *Vedas,* although they tolerate idolatry as the last provision for those who are totally incapable of raising their minds to the contemplation of the invisible God of nature, yet repeatedly urge the relinquishment of the rites of idol worship, and the adoption of a purer system of religion. . . ."[2]

No mention is made of the invisible God of history, only of the God of nature. In this, of course, he remained faithful to the Hindu outlook and still spoke to the antagonistic Brāhmins who opposed him on their own level. He went on to found, in 1816, the Ātmīya-Sabhā, a private society dedicated to spiritual improvement, and gathered around him a number of personal friends of the same mental caliber, such as Dvārakānāth Tāgore. But the hostility of the orthodox Brāhmins and *paṇḍits* was such that it soon collapsed. Undaunted, Rāmmohun Roy struggled on, came closer to Christianity when he declared that he had "found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any other which has come to my knowledge,"[3] but remarked that all pictures of Christ were false because they represented Him as a European, whereas in truth He was an Oriental. He also objected to the doctrine of the Trinity as smacking of veiled polytheism. He searched diligently through all the sacred scriptures of all religions and worked out his synthesis, one that was more intuitive than intellectual and therefore largely untransmissible. But his personality was strong enough to convert some Protestant missionaries to a Unitarian form of Christianity.

This led him to found, in 1828, the first theistic church in Calcutta. It became known as the Brāhma-Samāj, the "Society of Believers in God," a landmark in the history of India's religious thought, resting on an uneasy synthesis between Hinduism and Protestant Christianity (no pictures or images, no sacrifices, no tangible objects of worship were tolerated). Men of all creeds, all castes and social classes were invited to worship together: this idea of public worship and united prayer was an innovation, since it was previously unknown among the Hindus. Rāmmohun Roy's premature death in 1833 upset the Brāhma-Samāj temporarily, but it soon found in Debendranāth Tāgore (son of Dvārakānāth Tāgore) a worthy successor. Roy's broad-minded tolerance, however, was not inherited by the Tāgores. Theists like him, they swerved sharply from non-Hindu creeds back to a more strictly Indian form of theism; they also condemned polytheism and Vedāntic monism, but accepted from Hindu scriptures what confirmed their theistic position and rejected the rest. Their monotheism rested on the permanent dualism between God and human reason, to whom God granted the right to question all scriptures (the influence of Europe's eighteenth century's Age of Enlightenment is evident).

Debendranāth Tāgore was succeeded in 1862 by the third great Theistic Reformer of British India, Keshab Chandar Sen, who attempted to lead the Brāhma-Samāj back to a pure synthesis between a rejuvenated Hinduism, Protestant Christianity and Zoroastrianism. A break with the Tāgores followed, and Sen finally discarded Hinduism altogether and went on to establish a new creed that was in most respects a new Protestant Christian denomination rather than an emanation of Hinduism. But he remained as faithful as Roy, whatever he may have thought himself, to the specifically Hindu outlook. Among the articles of the new faith, it was stated that "the true scriptures are two—the volume of Nature, and the natural ideas implanted in the mind. The wisdom, power and mercy of the Creator are written on the Universe."[4] Nowhere is there any mention of the God of history, of the fulfillment of time or any of the fundamental elements of the true Christian outlook. And he always emphasized that the Christ he worshiped was the Oriental Christ, not Christ as understood by the West-European Christians. One can see quite clearly how this garbling of elements drawn from various contradictory religions could only end in some form of mental confusion. A philosopher may attempt to synthesize several doctrines mentally and succeed in formulating a coherent and convincing doctrine; but no one can dream up a new religion, make an artificial pot-pourri of conflicting elements and hope to generate on that strength alone the enthusiastic emotionalism that is required. One can profoundly admire the courage displayed by a man like Keshab Chandar Sen when he embraced the Christian Trinity, that very mystery which had always been a great stumbling block to both Hindus and Muslims, and when he was bold enough to challenge, in the teeth of fierce opposition, the caste system and start the marriage-reform movement. But the intellectual accomplishment was nil, and all such synthetic efforts were doomed.

Failure in all these attempts was inevitable. But, although rent by inner dissensions, the Brāhma-Samāj and allied organizations remained at all times high-level organizations catering to intellectuals, strongly influenced by the British schools and colleges and Christian institutions set up in India, and in turn able to influence directly the British Government of India in its legislative reforms. But in spite of its large-scale social work, the Brāhma-Samāj remained quite remote from the Indian masses. Furthermore, there was a fundamental incompatibility between the rigid discipline imposed by Keshab

Chandar Sen on his organization (something completely alien to the Indian spirit and essentially West-Christian) and a syncretic broad-mindedness that diluted its effective impact. What Sikhism had been to the Hindu-Muslim *rapprochement*, Brāhma-Samājism attempted to be to the Hindu-Christian. Sikhism had, finally, succeeded only in becoming a separate creed antagonistic to both its parents. Brāhma-Samājism attempted to avoid its predecessor's pitfalls and wrecked itself in the process. The all-embracing arms of the Hindu octopus are always open, ever-ready to swallow up any reform movement; the theistic reformers after all were not breaking sharply with Hinduism, since the latter accepts theism as a working religious hypothesis, and they had not given up Hindu domestic rites or caste customs.

But when all has been said about the relative failure of the Theistic Reform movements within Hinduism, it still remains that they had a lasting influence—not as separate autonomous organisms but as crystallizing a new attitude of the thinking Indians on religious matters. If one keeps in mind the fact, for instance, that the Prārthanā-Samāj of Bombay used selections from the *Vedas, Upaniṣads,* Islam's Koran, the Parsī Zend-Avestā and the Christian Bible in the 1880's, it becomes easier to understand the deep significance of Mahatma Gandhi's using the same intensely catholic and synthetic approach in his prayer meetings of the middle 1940's. The inquiring spirit of synthesis was now well established among thoughtful Hindus; and it was to the many theistic reformers that this spirit owed its enduring vigor. But there could never be any real progress toward theism so long as the spiritual and metaphysical significance of God in history was ignored, as it always was in India; and if it was once recognized, the logical outcome of this new revelation was entrance into the Christian Church. The actual behavior of Sen's followers symbolized this inevitable evolution: Pratāp Chandar Mozoomdār admitted as much to the great German Orientalist Max Müller in 1900; one of his disciples, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, became an Anglican and finally a Roman Catholic; Sen's official biographer Manilal C. Parekh was also converted to Christianity; and all admitted that, had he lived a few years longer, Keshab Chandar Sen himself would have become a Christian. Manilal C. Parekh said of him that he was "a Protestant in principle and a Catholic in practice. . . . Christian in spirit inclining to Monatism [faith in the supremacy of the Holy Spirit]."[5]

In fact, there was no way out of the dilemma, unless they were able to transcend both Hinduism and West-Christianity. This they proved unable to do. And they left as their only legacy a new spirit of synthesis that was to find a truer incarnation when the awakening of the heart took place. But meantime, another and contrary awakening of the head took place; and significantly enough, no longer in Bengal but in western India.

An entirely new movement began to take shape against the "Christocentric" ideas of the Brāhma-Samāj, a true Hindu Protestant Reformation that had nothing but contempt for Christianity, for the Brāhma-Samāj and for the Vedānta as well, that advocated with passionate violence a return to the pure, unadulterated teachings of the *Vedas*—whatever that meant. In fact, it was the first outstanding revolt of Indian thought against the invasion of Western ideas, against West-Christianity but also against the legacy of Europe's shallow Age of Enlightenment and its worship of human reason. It was fundamentally nationalistic, fiercely so.

Its founder was a remarkable Brāhmin from Gujarāt by the name of Dayānanda Sarasvatī, who, like so many inspired Indian mystics before him, felt compelled to become a *sādhu* for fifteen years and wander around India garbed in the usual saffron robe. After years of such wandering, he eventually fell under the spell of a powerful *guru*, Swami Virjananda Sarasvatī, and put himself under his iron discipline for over two years. Having at last promised his blind teacher that he would make it his lifework to eradicate all impurities from the body of his cherished Hinduism, he came back into the world and began his career as a religious reformer.

He started thundering against the monstrous excrescences that had warped Hinduism for thousands of years. The essence of his teaching was that only the original *Vedas,* as distinct from the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads,* were divine revelation (*a-paurusheya*), that the true Vedic teaching was monotheist, that all hymns to Agni, Indra, Sūrya and other deities were in reality addressed to the One God, that pantheism, Vedāntism and Tantrism were all monstrous corruptions that had to be rooted out. His powerful preaching produced reactions of unimaginable violence, far greater than anything that had confronted the Brāhma-Samāj, and precisely because his action was so much more powerful. Called to Benares in 1869, he engaged in a monumental contest against three hundred of the most

learned and influential *paṇḍits* of orthodox Hinduism and, after baving denounced Vedāntism witb virulent acidity, banged the door on orthodoxy and broke completely with the *paṇḍits,* those "popes," as he called them contemptuously, who had unjustly prohibited the study of tbe authentic *Vedas.* He got on no better with Keshab and the Brāhma-Samāj, and parted with them on the two topics that were so dear to his heart: the infallibility of the *Vedas* and the doctrine of transmigration (*punar-janma*). He claimed at all times that he was no independent thinker (*nāham-svatantraḥ*) but a true follower of the *Vedas,* struggled as a social reformer like his opponents of the Brāhma-Samāj (against child marriage, especially), was driven to create a new church, the Ārya-Samāj, or "Aryan Association," in 1875 and soon extended his network over all northern India. Springing from Gujarāt, one of the fountainheads of Indian men of action (Gandhi also came from there), this Indian Luther made his power felt in every corner of India except in South India, the home of the most intolerant form of Hinduism, the area where caste distinctions are the most cruelly rigid. The effectiveness of his preaching, and its peculiar quality, is symbolized by the fact that in 1921, nine-tenths of the Ārya-Samāj's membership came from the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh (United Provinces); and that the number of his followers multiplied tenfold between 1891 and 1921.

The important point about its immense success at the grass roots was not so much that it indicated a strong anti-Christian and more generally anti-Western feeling that was then welling up among the vast majority of educated Hindus. What was really of great significance is that it was some sort of a protestant reformation, a return or pseudo-return to the original purity of religion at its inception, and that as such it symbolized the birth of something entirely new in Hinduism: historical consciousness in embryonic form. Dayānanda was not content with massive and usually unwarranted attacks against the Bible and the Koran as well as against Buddhism and the Jains; he struck out at the *Purāṇas,* Tantra and Vedānta, and in general at that form of post-Buddhist Hinduism that had welded Gautama's teaching to pre-Buddhist Brāhmanism and had at the same time retrieved the matriarchal feeling of the pre-Aryan Indians. Trampling underfoot all the revered orthodoxy of the contemporary Brāhmins, perhaps blaming it unconsciously for the present degradation of both Hinduism and political India, he proceeded to write a mythical, inaccurate but impassioned history of religion,

Satyartha Prakash (*The Torch of Truth*), in which the Christian Bible was torn to pieces, one verse after another. His bird's-eye view of world history traces the alleged domination of India over the whole world in ancient times and shows us how mythologies can come to birth in modern times.

But far more than his narrow-minded, superficial metaphysics, his practical action achieved historical importance. He condemned caste without the slightest hesitation and advocated full equality for men and women. His violent campaigns in favor of the outcastes were far-reaching, considerably bolstered by a huge educational campaign —mainly in the Punjab and United Provinces—and the foundation of scores of educational and philanthropic institutions that were all bastions of a pure and yet modernized Hinduism. Dayānanda's actions symbolized an awakening of Hinduism, not of the old, original faith of the *Vedas* as its author thought, but of a new Hinduism already in full metamorphosis; his teaching was passionately nationalistic, yet had universalist pretensions; his concept of the true Aryan attitude was based not on the historical attitude of the Aryans fifteen hundred years before Christ, but on moral grounds alone: "The Aryans are all men of superior principles; and the Dasyus are they who lead a life of wickedness and sin."[6] For the first time, an authentic Brāhmin acknowledged the right of all human beings, regardless of caste, to read the *Vedas,* and took concrete steps to translate them from Sanskrit into the vernacular languages. More than anything else, he was able to infuse his tiger-like energy into the body of northern Hinduism and shake it to its depths, something that the Brāhma-Samājists had proved incapable of doing.

Without wishing it consciously, there was no doubt that his activities would eventually overflow the purely religious and spill into politics; and there is little doubt today that the great revolt in Bengal in 1905 was largely the indirect result of the Ārya-Samāj's religious nationalism and that Dayānanda's organization was the first real concrete nucleus of political nationalism. The new nationalism germinated in such educational institutions as the Dayānanda Anglo-Vedic College of Lahore and the Gurukul of Kangri, where the technical knowledge of the West was put at the disposal of an awakening Hinduism.

It is also clear that, in spite of their doctrinal divergences, the Brāhma-Samāj and Ārya-Samāj were both complementary, both symbols of an awakening of the head, one through an attempted

synthesis with West-Christianity, the other through an attempted return to the Vedic, autochthonous tradition of India. The first one operated largely in Bengal, the second in the Punjab and United Provinces; one was more religious and reflective and universalist, the other more active and nationalistic. But alongside them, a number of other movements and educational institutions began to crop up with far-ranging interests, blending Hindu and Western influences of diverse nature: the curious Dev-Samāj or "Atheistic Church of the Superman" whose weird mixture of rationalism, Nietzscheism and scientism was concocted by Swami Narayana Agnihotra, for example. But their impact was far more limited, and their appearance was more an historical oddity than anything else. All such movements were based on intellectual cogitations, set in motion by the impact of European Culture, with little intrinsic emotional appeal except on purely nationalistic, almost xenophobic grounds. The emotional appeal proper, this awakening of the heart rather than the head, could only come from the living depth of Hinduism as a materialization of intense spirituality embodied in sainthood. Intellectual problems had to be raised to the higher level of life-problems, the word had to become flesh before a truly organic change could take place in Hinduism. This was the lifework of Rāmakrishna Paramahansa, one of the few authentic saints of the nineteenth century, and possibly the greatest.

The strange religious genius who went by the name of Rāmakrishna was one of the most profound, hallucinating mystics produced by India at any time of its long history. Born of a poor Brāhmin family, he displayed early in his life all the marks of intense emotionalism and mystical aptitudes. He was the true heir of Bengal emotionalism, of the great mystics such as Chaitanya, of priest-poets like Chandīdās, more generally of the life-affirming followers of the path of religious love (*bhakti*), that is, of Tantra. A rich woman, Rani Rasmani, who was of a very inferior caste (wealth and social position in India often cut across caste lines) was looking for a Brāhmin to serve in a temple she had just caused to be built in the honor of the Divine Mother, Kālī, and fate would have it that Rāmakrishna accepted the position. This young man of twenty, endowed with fantastic sensitivity, was soon literally possessed by Kālī and went into a wild orgy of ecstasies that amazed even his Hindu visitors, accustomed as they are to such transports of religious frenzy.

Rāmakrishna was no *yogi,* knew nothing of the technique of con-
trolled mysticism, and so ran the great risk of going completely mad;
indeed, he seemed a raving lunatic to temple visitors and family alike.
Death is usually the outcome of such undirected raptures, and yet
the mere reading of his early ecstasies reminds one immediately of
all the archetypes that fill man's unconscious: the identification of
the Divine Mother with the ocean rippled by waves of liquid love—
but not in dream-state, in the waking-state as actual visions.

Nothing could have been more dramatically different from the
rational efforts of the Brāhma-Samāj than this amazing mystic who,
eventually, could move at will from one psychic condition to another
thanks to his superhuman power of visualized intuition, this *bhakta*
whose unbounded feeling of love overflowed the Tantric bedrock on
which it stood. He could and did become any of the great figures of
the Hindu pantheon—the monkey-god Hanumān, the elephant-god
Gaṇesa, or Rāma or Sītā, or any other deity. All visions were seen
by him with open eyes, and all evolved the same way: the visualized
figures appeared outside of him, then vanished within him, until he
became them himself. At that point most witnesses thought him in-
sane, and had it not been for external help, there is no doubt that
he would have died of sheer exhaustion. But help came, and in true
Tantric tradition, under the shape of a woman *guru,* the anonymous
Bhairavi Brāhmani who helped him immeasurably, disciplined him,
handed him the true technique and finally had him recognized as
an authentic *avatār* by the learned *paṇḍits.* Burned for so long by
the fires of uncontrolled ecstasy, Rāmakrishna's breast displayed the
revealing redness caused by the unusual afflux of blood, the sure
sign of the ecstatic.

His training was not over yet, and in 1864 a new *guru* came to
him in Dakshineswar, the equally anonymous Tota Puri (the "naked
man"), a Vedāntic ascetic who taught him the next stage, the over-
coming of the love of Kālī and of the worship of a personal deity,
and the way to the impersonal, formless God of the Vedānta. It is
worth quoting his own words as he describes the process:

The naked man, Tota Puri, taught me to detach my mind from
all objects and to plunge it into the heart of the Atman. But despite
all my efforts, I could not cross the realm of name and form and
lead my spirit to the Unconditional state. . . . I said to Tota Puri
in despair: "It is no good. I shall never succeed. . . ." He replied

severely: "What! You say you cannot? You must." Looking around him, he found a piece of glass. He took it and stuck the point between my eyes, saying: "Concentrate your mind on that point." Then I began to meditate with all my might, and as soon as the gracious form of the Divine Mother appeared, I used my discrimination as a sword, and I clove Her in two. The last barrier fell and my spirit immediately precipitated itself beyond the plane of the "conditioned," and I lost myself in *samadhi*.[7]

The most interesting part of the relationship between disciple and master, Rāmakrishna and Tota Puri, lay in a gradual switching of roles. Iron-hard, Tota Puri was a true Advaita Vedāntin to whom the world of creation was illusionary *māyā* and love (*bhakti*) superfluous emotionalism. To Rāmakrishna the Tantric, *māyā* was no illusion but was God Himself and love the essential force leading to Him. Tota Puri poured scorn on Rāmakrishna's displays of religious love, his hymns and religious dances, but failed to impress his disciple. And soon enough an amazing metamorphosis took place: the bard Punjabi that was Tota Puri succumbed to the prevailing atmosphere and the warm climate of Bengal, found his emotions caught and stirred by Rāmakrishna's melodious hymns, and finally surrendered unconditionally his Advaita Vedānta doctrine: he discarded monism, recognized that *māyā* and *sakti* were identical with Brahman, paid tribute to *bhakti*, and now acknowledged Rāmakrishna as his master. Summing up this whole experience, and in a way sounding the keynote of eternal Hinduism, Rāmakrishna said: "When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive, neither creating, nor preserving, nor destroying, I call Him Brahman or *puruṣa*, the impersonal God. When I think of Him as active, creating, preserving, destroying, I call Him *sakti* or *māyā* or *prakṛti*, the personal God. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference. The personal and impersonal are the same Being, in the same way as milk and its whiteness, or the diamond and its lustre, or the serpent and its undulations. It is impossible to conceive of the one without the other. The Divine Mother and Brāhman are one."[8]

And in another striking passage, Rāmakrishna adds: "Kālī is none other than He whom you call Brahman. Kālī is Primitive Energy (*sakti*). When it is inactive we call it Brāhman. But when it has the function of creating, preserving or destroying, we call That *sakti* or Kālī. He whom you call Brahman, She whom I call Kālī,

are no more different from each other than fire and its action of burning."[9] In fact, Rāmakrishna's creed was neither theism, nor monism, but unadulterated pantheism; his mature emotionalism was now under full control, and all his ideas, all the elements of his gospel were not so much thought out as actually *lived* by him in the flesh. All his concepts quickened into life; he was no thinker or philosopher, nor was he a man of action; he was pure mysticism, but somehow a generous mystic who longed to express himself, teach, influence and shape. It was after a cataleptic trance or ecstasy of about six months in 1866, a state of *samadhi* which lasted half a year, that Rāmakrishna came to "realize" his spiritual mission on earth. And from then on, he discouraged his ardent disciples from tasting the forbidden fruit of mystical ecstasy, however much they longed for it.

Having at last realized his Being, Rāmakrishna started traveling toward the same destination as the Brāhma-Samāj but on an entirely different plane. The Samāj had proclaimed the basic unity of all religions; Rāmakrishna now experienced this unity by putting himself in a condition where all the great religious figures of the world would appear to him in succession—and then become part of himself, or rather he of them. He was actually *living* the unity of all religions, whereas others had merely thought, talked or written about it. Keshab Chandar Sen himself eventually came under his spell, rejecting the rationalist viewpoint of his early days. And one by one, all the great Indian leaders of the time came to meet the wondrous saint of Dakshineswar—the Tāgores, whose aristocratic pride Rāmakrishna ridiculed with gentle humor; Dayānanda Sarasvatī, in whom he recognized some kind of contact with the Divine but whose narrow dogmatism he found repellent and whose ambitious concern with his influence in the world had led him to twist and distort the true meaning of the holy scriptures.

But it was his contact with the Brāhma-Samāj that finally brought him into the world of history by giving him a sense of mission; some mysterious process in his inner being finally convinced him that the God within him would not be content with personal salvation, and that more was required of him than of the usual *sadhakas*. He knew now that he was an *avatār* and predicted that he would be reincarnated again, two hundred years later, somewhere in the northwest— which some have interpreted as meaning Russia around the middle of the twenty-first century. In any case, it is quite clear that, what-

ever rationalization Rāmakrishna and his disciples may have formulated, his sense of earthly mission—which is unusual in contemplative mystics, and especially so in India—sprang from the conjunction of two main elements: his contacts with the active, Christian-inspired Brāhma-Samāj and the Bengal tradition of *bhakti* devotion and emotional, life-affirming Tantra, all of which were completely opposed to the negative, life-denying Vedānta. He longed to act, to shape the lives of others, to leave his imprint on the world; he was an embryonic prophet as well as a mystic, a symbol of India's awakening heart. And suddenly he experienced a crying need for disciples who could carry on his work effectively, since he knew that the time span allotted to him was short.

Soon enough, disciples began to flock to Dakshinesvar, many of them young men from Calcutta who had been influenced by the Brāhma-Samāj: medical students and physicians, intellectuals, merchants, men-servants, landlords, office workers, Brāhmins and low-caste men, in fact, men from all walks of life. Not only disciples came, but men from everywhere poured into Dakshineswar, maharajahs, *paṇḍits,* beggars, artists, journalists, Christians and Muslims, and countless others jumbled together in crowds. To all and one, he said: "Are you seeking God? Then seek Him in man. The divinity is manifest in man more than in any other object."[10] All visitors were exposed to the burning intensity of his insight, and only the few that could pass muster were retained as bona fide disciples. He never took them on without some sort of thorough examination which included a study of their chest (the redness of which disclosed the significant marks of ecstasies), of their breathing capacity, of the soundness of their nervous structure and circulation—all of which had to be excellent before they could undertake the exercises of deep concentration. But among all of them there was one remarkable man, his chosen disciple, who eventually translated Rāmakrishna's gospel into the language of service and brought it to the attention of the world: Narendranāth Dutt, better known as Vivekānanda.

It was a strange saga—this small Brāhmin saint from Bengal, steeped in the life-affirming, emotional atmosphere of Tantra, who proceeded to take upon his shoulders all the burdens of his time, whose boundless love overflowed on scores of remarkable disciples and through them influenced the destiny of India—through one of them, especially. Vivekānanda sprang from a noble Kṣatriya family

and was every inch a bold warrior. His grandfather had given up the world at the age of twenty-five, had become a *sannyāsin* and had disappeared in the anonymous mass of India's wandering ascetics, never to be seen again. Steeped in European culture, skeptical but richly endowed with brains and talent, Vivekānanda was taken by a group of friends to Dakshineswar, by then an established place of pilgrimage in Bengal. In lightning time, Rāmakrishna recognized in him the chosen disciple and proceeded to tell the amazed Vivekānanda all about his past incarnations, in a voice choked by emotion. At that point, Vivekānanda informs us, he was both struck by the greatness of the saint and also convinced that he "ought to be put in a strait jacket" and locked up in an asylum.[11]

Something compelled Vivekānanda to return to Dakshineswar a month later. Here is, in his own words, a brief account of what happened:

I found him alone sitting on his small bed. He was glad to see me, and called me affectionately to sit near him on one side of the bed. But a moment later I saw him convulsed with some emotion. His eyes were fixed upon me, he muttered under his breath, and drew slowly nearer. I thought he was going to make some eccentric remark as on the previous occasion. But before I could stop him, he had placed his right foot on my body. The contact was terrible. With my eyes open I saw the walls and everything in the room whirling and vanishing into nothingness. . . . The whole universe and my own individuality were at the same time almost lost in a nameless void, which swallowed up everything that is. I was terrified, and believed that I was face to face with death. I could not stop myself from crying out: "What are you doing? I have parents at home. . . ." Then he began to laugh and . . . said: "All right. Let us leave it at that for the moment! It will come, all in good time." He had no sooner said these words than the strange phenomena disappeared. I came to myself again, and everything both outside and in, was as before.[12]

In spite of his demonstrations of tremendous psychic power, Rāmakrishna was compelled to exert himself to the utmost to convert Vivekānanda to his new destiny. Vivekānanda's penetrating intellect was never satisfied, and although this very keenness delighted Rāmakrishna, who saw it as the mark of true greatness, it also hurt him more than once by the verbal violence of his disciple's retorts.

"How do you know that your realizations are not the creations of your sick brain, mere hallucinations?" he once asked.[13] But Rāmakrishna's intellect, as he soon discovered, was equal to his emotional powers; he did not attempt to prove the existence of God, but merely led his disciple by imperceptible degrees to a realization of Him. And later Vivekānanda said of his Master: "Outwardly he was all *bhakta,* but inwardly all *jnanin.* . . . I am the exact opposite."[14] And so it went, for a few years, until Rāmakrishna died in 1886, two years after the death of Keshab Chandar Sen which had affected him painfully.

Vivekānanda was essentially a man of action, a master of *karmayoga* by instinct; but the mystical pull was always immensely strong, and the atavistic desire to become concerned with his own personal enlightenment, which Rāmakrishna had so triumphantly resisted, exerted its irresistible pull right after his Master's death. The greatest mystic in India, at the time, was a saintly man by the name of Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur—a man who, contrary to Rāmakrishna, remained steeped in the old Hindu tradition of mystical indifference to the world, but a man whose fame was then at least as great as that of the gentle saint of Dakshineswar. Vivekānanda went to see him and spent several weeks in Ghazipur, torn between the mystical appeal of Pavhari Baba and the embryonic prophetic appeal of Rāmakrishna for service in this world rather than indifference to it. This eternal conflict between the claims of individual salvation and collective salvation, between personal self-realization and service in the world, is one that has haunted great men time and again; it would be nothing if it were not for this amazing sort of "fascination of the deep" that affects great mystics as it affects deep-sea divers, a fascination that very few can ever resist, this hypnotic appeal of the spatial infinite of which Pavhari Baba was the persuasive advocate. But Vivekānanda resisted, partly because of Rāmakrishna's imprint on him, partly because of his own atavistic nature—the fighting spirit of a true Kṣatriya born for involvement in the affairs of this world, not selfish detachment.

Vivekānanda's philosophy of life then began to develop gradually as he traveled all over India like a wandering *sannyāsin* of old, keeping in touch with Rāmakrishna's other disciples, watching, learning, meditating: at Khetri he studied under the most celebrated Sanskrit grammarian of his time, at Porbandar studied philosophy with court *pandits* who were translating the *Vedas,* at

Ahmedabad perfected his knowledge of Islamic culture and the Jain creed. Everywhere he went, he became increasingly conscious of the need for modernization, for breaking with the past and for awakening the dormant potentials rather than destroying them. He was haunted by the ever-present need for synthesis without sacrificing any of the elements that had made and still make the greatness of Hinduism. Inevitably, something new dawned on him, a crying need for a new dimension of human understanding that had always been sorely lacking in Indian consciousness: historical consciousness, the bold facing of historical reality—not just the prophetic instinct of Muslim culture but the detached, objective and scientific precision with which Western Culture was in the process of rescuing mankind's past from oblivion. He longed to see the creation of a school of Indian historians who would bring to life India's past and thus awaken a true national spirit in India.[15]

More than anything else, it was human misery that shook him to his depth, the misery of India's mute masses ("What have we *sannyāsins* done for the masses?" he asked time and again).[16] But what could he do to alleviate the burden crushing India's millions? Social indifference, one of the hallmarks of Indian civilization, was supreme in the land. And, inevitably, his thoughts began to turn to the West, to the dawning Civilization that had been largely responsible for awakening all those thoughts in him. At Khandwa in 1892, he heard about the Parliament of Religions that was to be held the following year in Chicago and made up his mind to go there and plead India's cause in the West. Patronized by the Maharajah of Khetri, he embarked at Bombay and started out on an astonishing journey.

His thundering success in Chicago electrified the entire Western world and brought India, so to speak, into the consciousness of most thoughtful Westerners—no longer the India of the theosophists (who disliked him) nor the cold, unrepresentative India of the Brāhma-Samāj (whose head, Pratāp Chandar Mozoomdār, also attended the meeting), but the living, dynamic India that was at last awakening. In the words of the New York *Herald*, Vivekānanda was "Undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."[17] But just as promptly quarrels, jealousy, misunderstanding began to mar this great success. Vivekānanda, like so many other Asians before and after him, expressed in almost insult-

ing tones the shock he experienced when he saw the glaring contradiction between Christ's doctrine and West-Christianity as practiced in modern times. Just as he then was attacked with unfair violence by a number of clergymen, he was stabbed in the back by all his jealous rivals: members of the Brāhma-Samāj, the theosophists, and others who slandered him mercilessly. But a towering giant of Vivekānanda's stature could afford to shrug off these frontal and flanking attacks, and he did so with commendable vigor. In addition, the United States, more than any other country of the West, seemed to be ripe for his message. Like Rome in Classical days, the United States was more fundamentally and vitally concerned with religion and religious matters than lands of old Culture such as ancient Greece and modern Europe. Prepared by Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman and William James, receptive to new religious ideas and sensitive to great religious personalities, America was then less corroded by religious scepticism than a Europe on the threshold of its historic decline.

Vivekānanda's perspicacity was acute and, although ever ready to flay the West-Christian's hypocrisy, he was ever more ready to humiliate India under the crushing evidence of the West's highly developed sense of social solidarity. Several remarks bring out in bold relief his genuine feelings and thoughts: "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism."[18] And then: "India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *mlechcha* and stopped from communion with others."[19] Several journeys to Europe enabled Vivekānanda to discriminate between America and the old Continent, between the modern Rome and the modern Greece—Europe with its old Culture, its higher intellect, its more mature outlook on life, its great Orientalists whom he met (Max Müller, Paul Deussen and others), and especially England, the mistress of his own homeland, of which he said: "No one ever landed on English soil with more hatred in his heart for a race than I did for the English. . . . There is none among you . . . who loves the English people more than I do now. . . ." And he then added this panegyric of the imperial nation, "a nation of heroes: the true Kṣatriyas! . . . brave and steady. . . . Their education is to hide their feelings and never show them. But with all this heroic superstructure there is a deep spring of feeling in the English heart. If you once know how

to reach it, he is your friend for ever. If he has once an idea put into his brain, it never comes out; and the immense practicality and energy of the race makes it sprout up and immediately bear fruit. . . . They have solved the secret of obedience without slavish cringing—great freedom with great law-abidingness."[20] Few imperial nations have stirred such feelings among the best of their conquered subjects.

But he never lost sight of his true mission: welding the immense power of the West and the deep spirituality welling up from the depths of an awakening Hinduism: "The British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of Ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the center of this machine and they will spread all over the world. . . . Spiritual ideas have always come from the downtrodden."[21] Yet, as he went on, he discriminated more and more among the various nations of the West. He felt more at home in Europe than America and, intellectually, more at home with some of the great German minds than with the more pragmatic British. His historic meeting with Max Müller, the greatest Orientalist of the time, elicited enthusiastic comments: "I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland! . . . He has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more. . . . [it has] colored his whole being. . . . He has caught the real soul of the melody of the Vedānta. . . . The jeweler alone can understand the worth of jewels."[22] He traveled through Germany, saw Paul Deussen at Kiel and talked to members of the Schopenhauer Society, and never was more touched than he was by the great German Orientalists.

It may be of interest to take note of a strange dream that haunted Vivekānanda on his way back to India, a dream that could be analyzed and perhaps interpreted as an unconscious reaction of the ahistorical Indian soul to the impact of history-conscious European Culture: an old man appeared to him and said: "Observe carefully this place. It is the land where Christianity began. I am one of the therapeutic Essenes, who lived there. The truths and the ideas preached by us were presented as the teaching of Jesus. But Jesus the person was never born. Various proofs attesting this fact will be brought to light when this place is dug up."[23] Having awakened and informed himself of the location of the ship, Vivekānanda was informed that they were fifty miles off the isle of Crete. Was it a prophetic dream or just the unconscious wish of a true Hindu soul? In

any case, as his biographer added, "for a spirit of his religious intensity . . . the historic reality of God was the least of His realities."

On another occasion (one of his lectures on *jnāna-yoga*) he involuntarily expressed the profound pessimism of the Indian soul when he described his conception of Evolution-Involution: "If we are developed from animals, the animals also may be degraded men. How do you know that it is not so? . . . You find a series of bodies, rising in gradually ascending scale. But from that how can you insist that it is always from the lower upwards, and never from the higher downwards? . . . I believe that the series is repeating itself in going up and down."[24] Vivekānanda, a faithful interpreter of the darkest recesses of the Indian soul, was obviously unaware of the stark horror of this Darwinism-in-reverse.

The news of Vivekānanda's triumph in Europe and America electrified India. The temptation to rope him into some political movement or other was too great to be resisted and his name was constantly touted in favor of this or that party; but he would have none of it, and warned: "Let no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings."[25] But, whether he wanted it or not, his great success was taken in India as a national triumph; his landing in Colombo in January, 1897, might have resembled the landing of Gautama Buddha himself, such was the size of the shouting multitudes, the singing of religious hymns, the immense processions that greeted him. At last, an Indian had shaken the West and had been able to convey to Westerners the idea that India had something to offer that the West did not possess.

In a famous Message to India, he sounded the call of awakening, in which he summed up his world-view with great forcefulness: "Each nation, like each individual, has one theme in this life, which is its center, the principal note round which every other note comes to form the harmony. . . . If any one nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries, that nation dies. . . . In one nation political power is its vitality, as in England. Artistic life in another and so on. In India religious life forms the center, the keynote of the whole music of national life."[26] And he went on to explain that India would die if its religion were to be discarded, that inevitably social and political reform had to be undertaken by channeling the religious vitality rather than by choking it off. But, he then went on,

"It is a man-making religion that we want. . . . And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true." But more startling, because it was no longer in the Hindu tradition, he added this warning: "Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong."[27] And glancing back at the past, he exclaimed: "Buddha ruined us as Christ ruined the Romans," claiming as a true Kṣatriya come to life in a modern setting that India's decadence was due to its giving up the heroic virtues of its Culture's springtime.[28]

The crowds hailed Vivekānanda all over India and howled "Śiva! Siva!" But there was more smoke than fire at the time. The awakening was slow, gradual, and Vivekānanda, although by far the most dramatic of all the Awakeners, was only one among many. And the Awakening itself did not take place quite the way he would have wished, spilling almost immediately after his death into violent politics. What was enduring in his work, what still endures to this day, is the concrete materialization of his devotion to Service: the Rāmakrishna Mission, which was founded in 1897 to spread the Master's gospel and be active in almost all branches of human endeavor except political; it was divided into an Indian branch with its monasteries (*math*) and convents for retreat (*ashram*), and foreign missions established abroad. To public service was added teaching the Vedānta doctrine—an illogical association since Vedānta, by essence, would not think it worth while to bother with the illusory world of *māyā*. The Rāmakrishna Mission was in fact of Western inspiration, something which many of its members understood and for which they reproached Vivekānanda; but he retorted that it was Rāmakrishna's own will that was being fulfilled and that they had misunderstood the great Master's intentions.

He then disclosed that a mysterious transmission had taken place a few days before the Master's death, which he described thus:

Rāmakrishna made me come alone and sit in front of him, while he gazed into my eyes, and passed into *samadhi*. Then I perceived a powerful current of subtle force, like an electric shock. My body was transpierced. I also lost consciousness. For how long I do not know. . . . When I returned to myself, I saw the Master weeping. He said to me with an infinite tenderness: "O my Naren, I am nothing now but a poor fakir. I have given thee all. By virtue of this gift

thou wilt do great things in this world; and not till afterwards will it be permitted to thee to return. . . ." It seems to me that it was this force which carried me into the turmoil and makes me work, work. . . ."[29]

Thoroughly impressed and silenced, his critics went to work: relief centers for famines, orphanages, training centers, clinics, educational institutions sprouted all over India, caring for all regardless of caste. The most remarkable aspect of Vivekānanda's fantastic activity was his ability to attract flocks of Western disciples who went to work in India with the greatest self-abnegation. One would think that with all this, Vivekānanda would have become sufficiently Westernized actually to discard most of Hinduism except the vaguest form of Vedāntism that could satisfy men of all creeds. But that was not at all the case: as time went on, his personal devotion turned increasingly toward polytheism (with the Advaita's absolute monism in the background) : his personal adoration of Kālī and Śiva amazed many Westerners who had known him well, but the atavistic call of Mother India was stronger than any foreign influence. Spiritual emotion was welling up in his heart and he could no longer repress it; but he also went on working like a demon and never once forgot Service, devotion to his fellow human beings, the fight and struggle to better the very same world despised by the true Vedāntists of the Advaita variety.

As time went on, his understanding of the world became more profound and more realistic. A second journey to the West opened his eyes to many of the Western shortcomings he had not seen the first time. On America, he finally said, hurt by racial discrimination and crude materialism: "So America is just the same! So she will not be the instrument to accomplish the work [of regeneration of mankind through union of East and West] but China or Russia"[30] —which makes strange reading in the second half of the twentieth century. He added, as a prophetic warning of the World Wars that were going to break on the Western world: "Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter: but underneath it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface; really it is full of tragic intensity. . . . Here [in India] it is sad and gloomy on the surface, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."[31] Seen through the prism of the Hindu world-outlook, Vivekānanda's pronouncements began to take on the prophetic tone of Israel's prophets

of old. In 1896, he said: "The next upheaval that is to usher in another era, will come from Russia or from China. I cannot see clearly which, but it will be either the one or the other." And he added: "The world is in the third epoch under the domination of Vaisya [merchants and capitalists, the Third Estate]. The fourth epoch will be under that of Sūdra [the proletariat],"[32] a very un-Indian pronouncement on the future course of history.

Finally, exhausted by his gigantic efforts ("I have done enough for fifteen hundred years," he said shortly before his death),[33] he died in July, 1902, and his remains were burned on the traditional funeral pyre. But his influence persisted long after his death and inevitably overflowed into politics—even though he had proclaimed without ambiguity in his last hour: "India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. If she gives it up for politics, she will die."[34] The greatest leaders of the early twentieth century, whatever their walk of life—Rabindranāth Tagore, the prince of poets; Aurobindo Ghose, the greatest mystic-philosopher; Mahatma Gandhi, who eventually shook the Anglo-Indian Empire to destruction—all acknowledged their overriding debt to both the Swan and the Eagle, to Rāmakrishna who stirred the heart of India, and to Vivekānanda who awakened its soul.

The awakening of India's head and heart took place at a time when India was firmly under British control. This awakening was sparked by the contact between European culture and India's ossified civilization, quickened to life also by the fact that European culture was in full development and had generated the Industrial Revolution. Inevitably, this awakening took place in an Anglo-Indian atmosphere and expressed itself in relatively new linguistic mediums: English replaced Persian as the universal language of India (as Persian had replaced Sanskrit), and the vernaculars developed an entirely new group of autonomous literatures in the various provinces.

When the British rule had become firmly implanted in Bengal, higher education took place in venerable institutions, *tols* and *madrāsās* imparting traditional learning in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian; the vernaculars were almost completely neglected. The first British proconsuls felt romantically attracted by an alien culture they did not understand, and encouraged its revival rather than its modernization: Warren Hastings founded the Calcutta Madrāsā in

1781; William Jones, the great Orientalist, founded the Asiatic Society in 1784; the Resident Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit College in Benares in 1792. But as British rule spread and became more secure in India, somehow the British began to lose all interest in an alien culture they had hardly begun to understand. A Company civil servant, Charles Grant, first touched upon the idea of establishing a new educational network to teach English and impart European culture to Indians, on the grounds that the old Indian education was responsible for India's evident decadence. Christian missionaries followed up his suggestion, and many of the great educational establishments of latter days were started in humble fashion by them. Every tentative effort made subsequently by the Anglo-Indian government to encourage strictly Indian learning was resisted by enlightened Indians; chief among them was Rāmmohun Roy, whose eloquent protest against the establishment of a Sanskrit College in Calcutta remains a classic. Referring to this decision in a petition to Governor General Lord Amherst, he pointed out that "The Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy. . . ."[35]

It can be imagined that many Englishmen were aware of the dangers of a new Indian education on modern lines; they always felt that to initiate the Indians to the new civilization of the West with its newly acquired and steadily developing mastery over the forces of nature was highly threatening to their rule. Keeping them within the narrow confines of their traditional culture would best ensure the longevity of the British Empire in India. Sir Richard Temple discussed at great length the potential discontent that was lurking in the hearts of the "educated natives" and contrasted it with the "loyalty" of the uneducated Indians. Evidently the racial arrogance that took hold of British men, and especially women, in the nineteenth century could not be maintained if Indians began to acquire the same technical mastery as the Europeans. A British Surveyor General of India symbolized this attitude when he wrote: "It is suicidal for Europeans to admit that natives can do anything better than themselves. . . . In my own surveying parties I never permitted a native to touch a theodolite or make an original computa-

tion, on the principle that the triangulation or scientific work was the prerogative of the highly paid European."[36] Time and again, the historian comes across instances of fears on the part of Europeans that imparting technical knowledge to Asians would be dangerous to their colonial or semi-colonial rule and that the "esoteric" character of European learning should be preserved.

But the clock could not be put back. In the early 1830's, the steady work of Christian missionaries and liberal Indians brought the whole matter to a head, and handed the "Anglicists" among the British rulers a historic victory over the "Orientalists" in their own midst. Missionaries like Alexander Duff, administrators like Lord Bentinck who established the Medical College in Calcutta, and especially educators such as the "Anglicist" Macaulay, carried the day. From 1835 on, European learning through the medium of the English language was patronized by the Anglo-Indian government and revolutionized the whole educational system of India—with far-reaching effects on the social and political structure of Indian society. The first result, of course, was to widen the great gap between the small English-educated classes and the great illiterate or vernacular-educated masses. The gap was also widened between the Hindu middle classes and the Hindu upper classes, who remained faithful to their traditional learning, and the Indian Muslims, who remained aloof from Western education altogether.

The awakening of India was, to a large extent, the result of the growth of liberalism in Europe itself—such historic moves in Britain as the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), the Reform Bill (1832), the Abolition of Slavery (1833), the New Poor Law (1834). These two movements evolved simultaneously and along parallel lines, and are closely linked together. They were, later on, to assume a psychological coloring in the twentieth century when increasing self-doubt in Europe stirred increasing self-assurance in India. Meantime, the educational network grew and spread out to the far corners of the Indian subcontinent; the first university in India was founded in Calcutta in 1857; in 1887 there were five universities. And simultaneously, the British began to encourage the development of vernaculars for primary and secondary education.

Thanks to the developments just outlined, India's century-old cultural stagnation came to an end in the nineteenth century. What took place was a cultural awakening, not a full and great cultural

development by history's standards. India experienced a cultural Indian Summer that was a reflection of the last phase of Europe's own Culture, one that did not outlast Europe's cultural decline in the twentieth century. But it laid the foundations of modern India and indirectly shaped India's latter-day political awakening. All through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this cultural development was almost exclusively literary and nonscientific. It is remarkable that a country such as Japan, which emerged from feudalism late in the nineteenth century, should have rapidly overtaken India in scientific matters and stood far ahead early in the twentieth. The shape given to higher education in India was responsible for this; from the very beginning, education as set up by the British, and as promoted by the Indians themselves, encouraged learning by rote, feats of memory and imitation rather than reason, judgment and powers of observation; it was an essentially utilitarian education, in an alien tongue that distorted the full expression of the Indian mind, aimed at the access to official positions in the civil service and entailed automatically a new form of social prestige: it was a new, Anglo-Indian mandarin system with many of the faults of such a system and few of its virtues. And it actually encouraged, instead of remedying, all the faults that had plagued the Indian mind since the beginning—lack of direct observation of external, objective things, lack of independent judgment, extreme wordiness and volatility.

Worse still, this "modern" education broke sharply with the traditional Indian system in being completely divorced from moral requirements; ethical considerations had nothing to do with it; and the result was plainly that the Indians either became completely amoral or reverted to their traditional culture in order to find some moral guidance. At least the old *pandits* taught fully integrated doctrines in which the ethical was ever-present; not so the new intellectuals, who adopted the worst features of European education in its modern, secular garb. This widened the gap between the Western-educated elite and the broad Indian masses by literally emasculating the natural leaders of India through an alien and almost exclusively literary education.

The other side of the coin is that it gave to India something it had not truly had since the days of Asoka: cultural unification, linguistic unity which, although it affected about 1 per cent of the population, enabled this small elite to have free intellectual intercourse. The In-

dian nationalism to come was born in the English language and expressed itself in English, since all the vernaculars were the natural vehicles of local and separate aspirations. The Indian press in English had already developed to a remarkable extent in the nineteenth century, and early in the twentieth more than a thousand books in English were published each year. All major discussions and controversies, either technical or political, took place in English. But it was and remained an alien tongue, the medium of expression of reflective thought and logical argumentation, not of the natural outpourings of the Indian heart. No real Anglo-Indian literature came into being; none could come into being. The nearest approach to something of the kind became known as *babuism:* Indian modes of thought clothed in exotic English phrasing, resulting in some of the most ludicrous and disconcerting pieces of English literature, replete with violent invective mixed with tearful sentiment, brought to an end by an unexpected anticlimax and ending in a piece of unsurpassed grandiloquence. But then, what to expect unless the writers in question became completely divorced from their Indian being?

The Western devotion to an almost mathematical precision in its verbal expressions finds it difficult to adjust to a mind that always thinks in poetic rather than mathematical terms, that seeks the inexpressible reality hidden behind contingent phenomena rather than study the phenomena with scientific precision. Indian verbal expressions lacked accuracy but were not necessarily dishonest, as so many Westerners came to think. In the words of an Indian writer: "It will not do to exaggerate the heating power of the sun, if you want to roast your beef by his rays. When, however, you do not desire to install the luminary of day as your chef, but to contemplate his majesty and glory, to meditate on the promise of his morning rays, and read the message of his dying splendors, then the play of poetic imagination becomes an essential condition."[37]

The true expression of modern India flowered in the vernacular languages, hitherto used mostly for oral communication and poetic expression. Here again, the pioneer was unquestionably Rāmmohun Roy, who all at once advocated European culture and yet made Bengali into a literary language; after him, the real founders of Bengali prose were great scholars such as Ishwar Vidyasagar and A. K. Dutt. But even the vernaculars bear the strong imprint of English models and patterns, in fact were quickened to life by the impact of English culture. One after another, the vernaculars became alive during the nineteenth century, offering new mediums of

expression to scholars, novelists, dramatists, philosophers—the novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the dramatist Dinabandhu and the poet Rabindranāth Tāgore in Bengali; the famous Tulsi Das in Hindi; Mir Taqi and Ghalib in Urdu; and many more in Marāthī, Gujarāti and so on. There was nothing of world-shaking importance in this literary production, but it dragged the new Indian middle classes out of their lethargy. The drama, especially, expressed the new desire for a more active, positive life; men such as Girish Chandra Ghose, a disciple of Rāmakrishna, forbidden by the Master to renounce the world and enjoined to put to good use his literary gifts, produced many dramas in Bengali. Dahyabhai produced plays in Gujarāti, Kirlosker revolutionized the Marāthī drama. In almost every case, social reforms were advocated with sincere conviction, and this form of literary pleading was far more effective than all the official reports of a hundred years.

Inevitably, these vernacular literatures began to stimulate the dormant nationalism of the Indians; the anti-British tone of Bankim Chandra Chatterji's famous works, *Ananda Math* and *Devi Chau Dhurani* was so obvious that the government thought of forbidding their publication on grounds of sedition. One certain advantage in this vague awakening of nationalism was to stimulate Indian interest in history, since all nationalistic sentiment is based on a specific outlook on the past. But the fundamental antipathy of the Indian mind for history as such stood always in the way, except in the shape of historical novels, which are the very antithesis of history. Yet, efforts were made by noteworthy scholars: Romesh C. Dutt (*Economic History of India*), Pramatha N. Bose (*Hindu Civilization During British Rule*), for instance. But Indian historiography was and remained a paltry affair, never displayed any true originality, never applied the immense store of Indian philosophic reflection to a topic which true Indians always deemed unworthy of study. But if not history as such, scholarship and learning in general were much prized, and Indians soon availed themselves of the immense work accomplished by European Orientalists in the nineteenth century; in Benares and Poona, especially, countless Indian scholars investigated the historical roots and life of Sanskrit and Pāli. Bāl Gangādhar Tilak, the first great political agitator produced by India in the twentieth century, was a great Sanskrit scholar.

As India, and the world, entered the twentieth century, an imper-

ceptible change began to take place. The immense prestige of European culture and the rocklike strength of the British Empire in India were beginning to show signs of impending decline. Internal developments were taking place in India which began to alienate the Western-educated Indians from their British overlords. The main development was psychological: the tardy realization of the English-educated class that its bargaining power vis-à-vis the British was nil so long as the chasm between the popular masses and itself was not bridged. This gradually led its leaders to soften their violent campaigns for social reforms in exchange for the support of the more backward elements of the Indian population—support for the coming political struggle against their British rulers. But whatever they did, however they did it, they owed everything to all those men who had been arousing India for over a hundred years, who had stimulated the Indian mind and stirred the Indian heart, and to their descendants, men like Ghokale and Mehta who knew that there was no point in putting the cart before the horse—but still upper-class men who could not and did not reach the Indian masses.

All this resulted, early in the twentieth century, in a gradual "politization" of the Indian elites; in no other country in Asia was the educated class becoming so immersed in political thought and action. Even moderates like Ghokale admitted that British domination was becoming harmful: "A kind of dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race is going on under the present system. We must live all our life in an atmosphere of inferiority, and the tallest among us must bend in order that the exigencies of the system be satisfied."[38] Premonitory mutterings could already be heard at the end of the nineteenth century—for instance, the controversy between Romesh Chandar Dutt, one of the first Indians to enter the Indian Civil Service, and the insensitive Lord Curzon over the reform of the land revenue system and the curbing of famines. Indians were entering the governmental structure in increasing numbers and were now in a mood to question the imperial power, even from within its administrative machinery. Yet they were numerically weak: in 1903, the year of Lord Curzon's historic Durbar, there were only 94 Indians out of 1,307 members of the higher Indian Civil Service.[39] Except for the judiciary department, the limitations set on the advancement of Indians in the imperial bureaucracy and government were stringent. Excluded from a legitimate share of the government of their own country, educated

Indians began looking elsewhere for full employment of their talents and energy—and they soon found it in political activity.

All this would have actually been nothing, had it not been for extraneous circumstances. Such a situation could have dragged on almost endlessly if it had not been for the fact that, as Vivekānanda had warned, Europe stood on the brink of a volcano. European Culture was already declining, and European power was about to collapse. This was bound to reflect on British power and prestige and give heart to the increasing number of Indians who sensed that this was the end of an era.

Europe's Oriental Renaissance

FROM the nineteenth century onward, the fate of India was intimately connected with, and dependent on, that of Britain, and that of Britain with that of Europe. A study of India's evolution in the twentieth century includes automatically a thorough study of Europe's, a task that is made all the easier because of a phenomenon one could term the "Oriental Renaissance" which is in great part due to the powerful impact of India on Europe—a cultural impact, not a political one.

Karl Marx's alter ego, Friedrich Engels, held that "primitive communism was the first state of humanity," thus stamping Marxism as being a new, a second Protestant Reformation in the sense of harking back to a presumed past in order to start a new development toward the future, but a past that was far more distant than the Biblical past that served as background for Luther and Calvin. Just as the Reformers of old have their modern shadow-soul in Marxism, so does the Classical Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have its modern counterpart, the Oriental Renaissance. Just about when so many men were girding their loins for ruthless action on a global scale and were closing their minds in order to work themselves up to a pitch of unalterable fanaticism, other men were moving in an opposite direction, opening their minds to entirely new influences blowing in from the Orient, broadening their mental outlook to include cultures that had until then been hermetically sealed to the West. These contrary developments, operating in the modern world in almost contrapuntal fashion, have had a joint impact that parallels their illustrious predecessors: moving in opposite directions, the Classical Renaissance and Reformation tore apart the grand unity of Gothic Christendom; their modern replicas eventually smashed the grand unity of European Culture and were greatly re-

sponsible for the decline of Europe, the main leitmotiv of the twentieth century. The Oriental Renaissance and the great secular religions that issued from Marx and his rivals contributed further to the devastating confusion of European minds, inciting men of action onto the path of pure prophetism dedicated to the exclusive shaping of history (Marxism, Pan-Germanism), pushing more contemplative men toward a weakening pseudo-mysticism that was merely a flight from life and its struggles.

The Oriental Renaissance did not exactly start yesterday. It germinated for many centuries before it accelerated its tempo and vastly amplified its field of action in the nineteenth century. Its inception was due to the remarkable curiosity of the European mind for other ways of life and other psychological outlooks. Being somehow able to separate the subjective from the objective with far greater sharpness than men of any other Culture, European man displayed an interest in other cultures, dead or alive, that has no equivalent in history. This curiosity did not have much to feed on, in earlier days, in the way of actual knowledge and accurate information; but from the seventeenth century onward, this modicum of knowledge was already sufficient to leave profound traces in the maturing Culture of the West. In this sense, the Oriental Renaissance is already part and parcel of our cultural texture, has indeed become part of our life in countless unobtrusive ways. And in this sense, the Oriental Renaissance is a phenomenon of primary importance which, in scope and depth, has no equivalent in the history of any other Culture.

In order to grasp the historical articulations of this Oriental Renaissance, one has to establish from the start certain psychological parallelisms—between the Chinese and the French, on the one hand, and between the Germans and the Indians, on the other. Hindus and Germans are intensely subjective and mystical, and are moved by deep unconscious forces that are often in close connection with the highest mental powers. They are quite contemptuous of general patterns of thinking and uniformity in social behavior. They rely on intuition rather than straight logic, and both Śankara and Kant raised their magnificent philosophic systems on a precise delimitation of the powers of discursive logic and reason. Hindus and Germans both experience great difficulty in rising from the depths of their intuitive thinking and expressing their thoughts in clear language. Like all those who are mystically inclined, they are often quite content when they can understand their own minds and bother little

about the intellectual "transferability" of their mental cogitations. They both revel in self-experimentation, in turning themselves into human laboratories—the Hindus individually, the Germans collectively.

On the other hand, the French and the Chinese—after having reached the classical form of their cultures in which the mysticisms of Pascal and Chinese Buddhism, and the irrational, emotional "return to nature" of Rousseau and Lao Tzu are superseded by Confucius and Descartes, Chu Hsi and Voltaire—think more often reasonably and rationally. Germans and Indians are ruled by deep instincts, and never can resist the urge to think intuitively and synthetically, an urge common to mystics, who are always searching for the fundamental unity underlying all things. They rarely attempt to clarify their ideas, and more important still, they start from abstract ideas which spring up from their unconscious and subjectively fit the facts of everyday life to the intellectual pattern deducted from their ideas. Because of this very absence of internal logic and clarity, because of this lack of ordering of their ideas from *within,* they both impose "systems" from the *outside.* Where the French and the Chinese work reasonably from observed facts to general theories, Germans and Indians derive their concept of the real from an a priori idea or principle. Both are therefore deep metaphysicians, imbued with the importance of actual *living* rather than mere *thinking,* of what is organic rather than what is mechanical.

The French and the Chinese, on the other hand, are essentially humanists with a feeling for form and good taste, who lay stress on the conscious and the intelligible and shun the unconscious, who cultivate balance and harmony at the expense of depth, and who are perennially unable to understand the alien and unfamiliar. They are essentially conformists for whom rites create patterns to which all should conform, and it is striking that both the French and the Chinese have displayed the same enduring distrust of individual originality, the same aptitude at raising the general level of their culture rather than developing the exceptional talent. Theirs are essentially cultures of *expression:* the more perfect their outward expression, the more perfect their inner state of being. Every European country has had its intellectual giants: Shakespeare, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe. Against each one of them, the French can align ten names, but all of them slightly inferior in the power of true originality and personality. Likewise, China could boast thousands

of poets, scholars and philosophers, but no outstanding personality remotely comparable to those of India—even in modern times when the colorful Roys, Keshabs, Rāmakrishnas, Vivekānandas, Gandhis and Nehrus have no equivalents among China's intellectual and political leaders, shadowy and slightly anonymous men like Sun Yat-sen, Hu Shih, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung.

France and China were able to set the general cultural level of their respective citizens on a far higher pedestal than any other society on earth, but at a price. The French and the Chinese remain, at heart, convinced *classicists* with a taste for harmonious, well-balanced ordering of things, for formal rather than heartfelt politeness, for gardening, and for refined cuisines that became, respectively, *the* cuisines of West and East. Germans and Indians are utterly uninterested in harmony and equilibrium, and the German *Masslosigkeit,* this yearning for the excessive and inordinate, has its perfect counterpart in Indian psychology. They are passionate seekers, desperately working toward a subjective understanding of their deep and complicated souls.

These two opposite attitudes had a profound impact on the political and social units around which they organized themselves. Indians and Germans both developed a caste system, a rigid structure which classifies and also preserves the originalities and specific characters of hereditary functions and callings. Fettered externally, having mechanized the objective life, the inner personality is free to pursue its own subjective quest and attempt in utter freedom to realize its profound aspirations. They both achieve greater inner freedom, profundity of thinking and true originality than any other people in the world. In fact, they both created the most powerful metaphysical systems ever thought up by man. Even in their social structures, the parallelism is truly remarkable. The German social classes of the medieval period perpetuated themselves well into the twentieth century and, in their utter rigidity, were actually closer to closed castes than fluid classes such as prevailed elsewhere in Europe: we find the ecclesiastical princes and higher clergy corresponding to Brāhmins, lay princes and knights to Kṣatriyas, *Bürgerstand* to Vaisya and *Bauernstand* to Sūdra. The Germans were physiologically a caste people like the Indians, and for the same psychological reasons: both are introverts, both need to be born into a pre-existing social structure that will allow the free development of variations—but only within limits since the number of human types is not unlimited.

Nothing is more comparable to a ponderous German scholar than an Indian *paṇḍit,* nothing resembles more one of the innumerable petty German princes than one of the hundreds of Indian maharajahs and nawabs; the professional German soldier from the Prussian Junker caste is a perfect replica of the Indian Kṣatriya—all this, of course, in pre-World War days.

Such rigid stratification contrasted violently with the Franco-Chinese taste for social equality and fluidity, however remote they might have been at times from their professed ideal. After they had both overcome historically their *ancien régimes,* they recruited their ruling elements through mandarin-like intellectual examinations and imposed, as a ransom for their social equalitarianism, an intellectual uniformity in their thinking that raised the average but inevitably depressed the original and the exceptional talent. Politically, this tendency expresses itself through the medium of strong, relatively centralized states in which uniformity and standardization of the ruling personnel are the rule. In contrast to the uniform Chinese and French states, Germans and Indians have reveled most of the time in a multiplicity of small princely states and regional autonomy among which differentiation was emphasized and political effectiveness destroyed. Unification and centralized power (Mauryas and Guptas, Holy Roman Empire and Bismarck's Second Reich) are the exception that confirms the rule. The French and the Chinese are fundamentally politically minded; the Indians and the Germans are fundamentally apolitical, *unpolitisch.*

It is easier now to understand why Europe's Oriental Renaissance went through two different phases. At first, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europe was entirely dominated by French culture; and naturally enough, that was the time when Chinese influence made itself felt too. Knowledge of China at the time was almost entirely due to the immense intellectual labor of the Jesuits, and it is one of the ironies of history that the Reverend Fathers should have given such an exotic backing to the anti-Catholic rationalism of the "Age of Enlightenment." But with the decline of France's cultural pre-eminence in the West, with the passing of the age of Classicism in which Chinese and French motives mixed harmoniously even in their respective furnitures, Chinese influence waned and finally came to an end in the dawning age of Romanticism. That is when Indian influence took over. But it would be utterly impossible to comprehend the interpenetration of German and In-

dian philosophic thought in the nineteenth century if their common characteristics were overlooked—and also the lack of comparable Franco-Chinese interpenetration, owing to the very nature of their respective cultures, their intellectual rigidity and urbane arrogance, their emphasis on objectivism and consciousness rather than subjectivism and the unconscious. Germans could find a stirring echo of themselves and of their most profound yearnings in Indian philosophic thought—but French rationalism and classicism could find no such echo in the tepid, down-to-earth reasonableness of Confucius or Chu Hsi.

Another element must now be added to these psychological parallels: the difference in historical phase and geographical setting. The Indian Aryans were free to follow their natural bent at all times and were in a position to formulate the final expression of their civilization thousands of years ago. The Germans were "civilized" by Rome, strait-jacketed into a cultural structure in which they were compelled to absorb Semitic-Biblical prophetism, Greek logic and Roman legalism; but they never fully accepted these elements, always felt that their most profound yearnings could not be adequately expressed, and always resented the historical epithet "barbarian" hurled at their Teutonic, tribal ancestors by the Latins. Luther's Reformation had broken with Rome and the whole Latin heritage, and had freed a large portion of Germany; but it did not swerve toward Calvin's Reformation, in which the Semitic and Biblical element was paramount and with which the Germans were not in sympathy. Luther's Reformation remained incomplete, and only fulfilled itself in the nineteenth century when German philosophy assumed an undisputed pre-eminence. And in the formulation of that philosophy, Indian influence was of paramount importance.

The second, most important phase of the Oriental Renaissance was utterly different from the Chinese one, in scope and profundity. All through the Gothic Age and its aftermath, influences from the Orient filtered in steadily, carried along by slow caravans or sailing ships that relayed goods all the way from the Far East. But the opaque walls remained standing, isolating the great Civilizations of the East from the budding Culture of the West as if they were living in far-distant planets. To a large extent, they were closed monads without windows; European man could only look at them from the outside as a modern astronomer gazes at a distant galaxy through

his telescope. Only the vague contours could be guessed at, weird and fascinating contours; but the essence of the East, of India especially, remained aloof, incomprehensible and unexplored. However, Western man's urge toward the infinite, his passion for a third dimension of human understanding that was quite alien to the Indian soul, was going to drive him mercilessly toward an artistic, psychological, philological and finally philosophical exploration of the East, as it was already driving him toward a geographical exploration of the world and a scientific exploration of nature.

What Europe discovered with amazement in the nineteenth century was the profound thought of India, no longer the urbane humanism of an enduring China, and this at the time that German philosophic thought was becoming paramount in the West. But the very first diggings were done by some French and many more British scholars. Late in the eighteenth century, about the time that the French Revolution broke out, Anquetil-Duperron translated the *Upaniṣads* from a Persian translation; from then on, the most spectacular salvage enterprise known to history was under way: nothing less than the total recuperation of mankind's past wisdom, entailing a colossal broadening of man's collective memory. A large part of this salvage enterprise consisted in extracting dead ruins from the sands or the jungles, in deciphering dead languages and scripts which no living man could any longer read. But the other and most fruitful part consisted in attempting to understand those civilizations that were still alive though immensely old and crippled with cultural arthritis. It was the fascination of discovering large portions of the human race still living and abiding by their old religions and cultural traditions going back to the remotest antiquity, apparently indifferent to the impact of the West and totally lacking in a corresponding curiosity in regard to European Culture. This was the real, profound impact of the East upon the West. European man, fascinated by a "past" that should have been dead long ago, by a contemporary "antiquity" which had assumed amazing stability and apparent contentment, could not rest until the secrets of such uncanny ways of life and of thinking had been brought to light.

With prophetic insight, Anquetil-Duperron had pointed out that Kant's idealism had many points in common with the *Upaniṣads,* and the Germans themselves soon began to discover their natural affinity for Indian thought. But in these early days, most of the spadework was done by the British overlords themselves. Conscious

of the vastness and mysterious character of their new domain, they had determined that they would explore the cultural depths of India in order to secure their political rule. William Jones, Charles Wilkins, Thomas Colebrook and the Asiatic Society of Calcutta worked tirelessly at this cultural exploration. Many more British scholars followed in their wake. But then, a curious reaction began to take shape in Britain, the imperial mistress of a fast-increasing Indian domain, a fear at the sight of the intellectual monuments of a defeated civilization, fear for her political supremacy and for her cultural superiority. From this reaction sprang the increasingly unenlightened outlook of the "missionary attitude," a closing of the minds and a gradual elimination of the former cultural understanding in favor of an imposition of political and economic supremacy. Domination always implies a certain degree of incomprehension, and if British domination was to survive in India, the great quarrel between the Anglicists and the Orientalists had to be won by the former—which it was around 1835. Macaulay hammered the last nail in the Orientalists' coffin by denying the usefulness of any attempt at understanding Indian culture and deciding that English was to become the medium through which India would receive the benefits of modern knowledge.

The Germans took up where the British had left off. Politically unconnected with the Orient, and with a far superior philosophic approach, the Germans were to prove from then on the greatest Indianists of all—just as the French remained the greatest Sinologists. They were quite conscious of this switch, and the German poet Heinrich Heine pointed it out with irony: "The Portuguese, Dutch and English have been for a long time, year after year, shipping home the treasures of India in their big vessels. We Germans have all along been left to watch it. Today Schlegel, Bopp, Humboldt, etc. are our East Indian sailors. Bonn and Munich will be good factories."[1] Behind this remark lay that historic bitterness of the Germans which goes a long way to explain their modern history.

Thoughtful Germans had been increasingly irked by the political impotence of a homeland split into countless medium and small states. Somehow, and for similar psychological reasons, plurality seems to be as much the rule in German as in Indian politics. And also, the post-Renaissance conquests and explorations had all redounded to the benefit of coastal Europe (Portugal, Spain, France,

Britain and Holland), not the landlocked countries of Central Europe which had the burden of having to repel Turkish assaults and protect Western Europe. The Holy Roman Empire was an empty ghost whose last powerful head, Charles the Fifth, owed his power to Spain and the Low Countries, not to his German possessions.

Germany's political impotence was due, as had been India's, to the prevalence of the tendency toward political plurality; and what could put an end to it, what could begin to unite all Germans into one political body fired with one common destiny, was a new consciousness of history, of historical destiny. It was a strange but profoundly symbolical coincidence that Herder's famous *Ideas on the Philosophy of History* should have been published in 1784, the very same year that saw the foundation of Calcutta's Asiatic Society. It was no coincidence, however, when the Germans began to elaborate their philosophies of history and seek in the meaningful process of time a knowledge of their historical destiny. Germany was then able to forge a new unity, thanks to this reawakening of historical consciousness, something that India had never been able to achieve; but in this process, the growing knowledge of Indian civilization was going to provide the Germans with all the ammunition needed for this dynamic conception of German destiny. It was Herder who first struck a blow at the Classical Renaissance and rehabilitated the Teutonic barbarians by upholding their historic right to destroy the Roman Empire; and his immediate successors were indebted to him for their introduction of a new ethnic principle in the very concept of "Renaissance."[2]

Before studying the detailed impact of Indian thought on German philosophy, it is essential to have a brief picture of the historical development of the German soul—given the psychological elements already outlined. The Germans had always tended toward a certain form of pantheism, and their opposition to Calvin's pure, almost "Semitic" monotheism (and lack of mysticism) was just as forceful as it was to the veiled polytheism of Roman Catholicism. German pantheism tends to merge God and the created universe, and German mysticism emphasizes the necessity of direct union between God and the human soul. But imbued with the specific dynamism of Western Culture, the Germans developed in a direction that was quite opposite to that of Indian culture; they visualized the universe as an objective entity through which spiritualized matter evolves

eternally into more perfect creations in a perpetual Becoming which endows history with metaphysical significance.

Centuries ago, before the Reformation took shape, German mystics such as Meister Eckhart, Suso and Tauler had already displayed their strong sense of "development," of directional movement. They saw the universe as the Divinity itself and they saw evil as incarnate in *separation,* in individualism. Nothing but the merger of the individual with the divine essence can put an end to evil. This combination of mysticism and pantheism was going to find its greatest liberator and interpreter in Martin Luther who, significantly, metamorphosed the Roman Catholic notion of *transubstantiation* into the pantheistic *consubstantiation.* But then, going beyond Luther even, new mystics arose, far into the eighteenth century, who rejected even the modicum of Church discipline and authority that Luther had attempted to preserve and who gave themselves unreservedly, Indian-wise, to their mystical yearnings in their *collegia pietatis,* throwing overboard all forms of theology. Extreme pantheism, on the other hand, had found its most eloquent exponent in the famous mystic Angelus Silesius, who claimed that God would not exist without the creatures in which He manifests Himself. And Goethe, later, expressed, in superb literary form, this fundamental pantheism of the German soul. It was obvious that by completing the evolutionary cycle, the profound idealism implied in this type of pantheism could easily and quickly be transmuted into fullfledged materialism and that it was as remote as possible from religious transcendentalism: that was the development from idealistic Hegel to materialists Marx, Engels and Feuerbach. In any case, the notion that God was pure Becoming and no longer pure timeless Being was slowly working its way into German consciousness.

Rejecting with violence the harmonious balance which the Latins had attempted to preserve throughout, German subjectivism seemed to result in the development of the Teutonic personality through its two extremities—an acute feeling for concrete reality (displayed in economic and military power, for instance) and a sentimentalism, a dreamy mysticism that was intellectualized in profound metaphysics and expressed itself artistically in music. The Germans shunned with contempt the well-balanced rationalism and skepticism of the Cartesian and Voltairean French who were neither very profound nor quite in touch with concrete reality; and they also shunned the

pragmatism and utilitarianism of the equally concrete-minded An-
glo-Saxons who were unwilling or unable to delve into the same phil-
osophic depths.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Germans detached them-
selves in fact from either form of Western Christianity, Roman Cath-
olic or Calvinistic Protestantism, and eagerly sought in the Orient
certain elements that could be grafted onto their own system. The
Germans were the only Westerners who, short of falling into the irre-
ligious frame of mind which prevailed in France, attempted to alter
their *Weltanschauung* in the light of scientific thought and work out
a synthesis between science and religion which the practical dualism
of both the Roman Catholics (enforced by historical circumstances)
and Protestants brushed aside. This they could do thanks to their
philosophy of history, an intellectual discipline that, since Descartes,
had been rejected by other Westerners. Thus, the whole process of
German thought from Kant to Hegel was one of overcoming the
dualism stated by Kant and of reaching Hegel's dialectical monism.
That this philosophy sprang from a still-incomplete Lutheran Refor-
mation and owed nothing to Roman Catholic doctrine as it crystal-
lized after the Council of Trent, is proved by the fact that the most
noteworthy thinkers came from Protestant Germany and that Kant,
Fichte and Hegel, in particular, were Prussians. They were the out-
standing figures in this philosophic awakening of Germany, living in
a Spartan state that was eventually going to dominate and absorb
the rest of Germany and Austria and apply to world politics and
history some of the philosophic conclusions reached by them.

The growing divorce between Franco-British philosophy, which
still remained in the grooves set by Descartes, Hume and Bentham,
and this new German philosophy was the outstanding development
of Western thought in the nineteenth century. This widening chasm
was precisely the weakness passionately and unconsciously longed for
by most thoughtful Asians. Especially to the Indians, who were just
as puzzled by the fantastic development of scientific knowledge, this
long philosophic pilgrimage of Germany was their own pilgrimage;
their own Indian past, their thought and culture became the treas-
ure house to which the Germans helped themselves in order to wreck
the heartland of European Culture in the twentieth century.

The awakening German intellectualism, scouting the world for
useful ammunition in its tireless work of destruction of established

cultural values, began to scrutinize India with passion. Germany became the great laboratory of Indian studies; but far from surrendering to the Indian historyless outlook, the Germans threw all the serviceable items they could glean into their forceful reinterpretation of history. For the Germans the Oriental Renaissance became a perfect tool against the first, the Classical Renaissance that had originated in the Latin South of Europe and had allegedly deprived the Teutonic Gothic culture of its well-deserved credit. Indian culture was now called to the rescue against both the Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions of the West. Sanskrit was discovered to be the ancestor of all Aryan languages—and therefore of Greek and Latin as well. Flourishing at first in Weimar, Jena and Heidelberg, and then in Bonn, Berlin and Tübingen, this Oriental Renaissance gripped the entire intellectual world of Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century. Moved by an almost ludicrous passion for all things Indian, philosophers such as Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Schleiermacher, poets such as Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Tieck and Brentano, historians like Herder and Schlegel, all acclaimed the discovery of Indian culture with cries of ecstasy: India, the home of the original and universal religion, the cradle of the noblest human races, of all literatures, of all philosophies and metaphysics!

This enthusiasm was not confined to Germany. The entire Romantic movement in the West put Indian culture on a lofty pedestal which the preceding Classical movement had reserved for Greece and Rome. The opening guns were fired by Friedrich Schlegel, who attempted to prove that the Indian conception of the Godhead was almost similar to the Roman Catholic; without dislodging the Biblical Hebrews from their historical position as God's "Chosen People," he attributed to Hindus and Zoroastrians a metaphysical outlook closely similar to Christianity's. He was the first to proclaim that, alongside Greece and Germany, India had produced the greatest and most profound philosophers. And the great Hegel himself, who understood India far more profoundly, was to remark in his work on *The Philosophy of History:* "It strikes everyone in beginning to form an acquaintance with the treasures of Indian literature, that a land so rich in intellectual products and those of the profoundest order of thought, has no History; and in this respect contrasts most strongly with China—an empire possessing one going back to the most ancient times."[3]

Before going any further into philosophic considerations, a more accurate picture of Indian culture had to be drawn. Philology took over. Sanskrit became, for all those who at first attempted to annex Hinduism to Christianity, the mother of all languages, among which a now dethroned Greek was only one among many. There were, besides the historical evidence, some profound psychological reasons for the emphasis placed by the Germans on this fact: the philological structure of German is closer to Sanskrit than any other language in the West—the same illogical, irrational syntax, obscure and often profound, that differs so markedly from the mathematical precision and clarity of French. Based on an endless flow of words, often created on the spur of the moment by agglutination, they both have a remarkable adjective-forming freedom which gives them unlimited scope and profundity, and only too often a confusing obscurity as well. Conscious of this close link, the German scholar Bopp went beyond pure philology and attempted to extract a psychological interpretation from his linguistic research and discover in each language the "specific character of each nation's psychic activity."[4] Hegel himself said that "It is a great discovery in history—as of a new world—which has been made within rather more than the last twenty years, respecting the Sanskrit and the connection of the European languages with it. In particular, the connection of the German and Indian peoples has been demonstrated. . . ."[5]

It was inevitable that all these scientific discoveries, based on objective investigations of things that once were, would soon be taken over and utilized by men with a special bias. The great German philological discoveries were promptly annexed by the growing body of Pan-Germanists who transmuted the *philological* term "Indo-European," coined early in the nineteenth century, into the cultural and then *racial* expression "Indo-German." The artisan of this bold transformation, soon hailed all over Germany with an enthusiasm usually reserved to victorious conquerors, was Klaproth. To him, Germany owed this mental annexation of Aryan India and Aryan Persia to "Aryan" Germany. In Heidelberg's intellectual factories, *linguistic* links became *ethnical* bonds, and German racialism was born. Even though a few scrupulously honest scholars such as Humboldt and Bopp had fought against the trend, the historical current was flowing too strongly and swept them away with their protestations. The innate superiority of the "Indo-Germans" over all other races was now

taken for granted, and the historical past was entirely overhauled in the light of this great new "discovery." It was soon afterward that the French writer Gobineau stated explicitly the new thesis of the super-race in his famous *Treatise on the Inequality of Races*—Gobineau who had spent many years in the Orient as a diplomat and had acquired a remarkable grasp of Western Asian cultures.

So far, the Oriental Renaissance, having escaped from the hands of the objective scientists to become the instrument of a subjective Pan-Germanism, had assumed the romantic aspect of a reaction against the Greco-Latin Renaissance, against the presumed superiority of Mediterranean Classicism. It was a tool destined to destroy the hallowed thesis that the civilized Romans and Gallo-Romans had seen their civilization destroyed by the barbarian Germanic tribes. The whole concept of the Dark Ages attributable to Teutonic invasions, of the cultural superiority of Latin races and especially of French Classicism, was thrown out.

Now, however, a new reaction set in alongside the anti-Classical one. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and many others led a new school of thought that no longer fought the Greco-Roman legacy of Western Culture (they annexed it, rather), but its Semitic legacy. According to their views, pure religious and profound philosophic thought could only emanate from Aryans—whether Teutonic, Indian, Persian or Greek. The introduction of the Bible's Hebraic tradition had had a corrupting effect on the whole of European Culture. They inveighed against the narrow-mindedness of the Semitic mind, its materialism and lack of mysticism, its intolerant monotheism. They found, of course, plenty of fuel for their anti-Semitic fury in the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads,* went so far as to find some of it in Buddhism and in Zoroastrian Persia's *Zend-Avestā*. This new school of thought joined hands with the anti-Classicists to produce in Houston Stewart Chamberlain's ponderous work, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century,* the redoubtable bible of Pan-Germanism and of its National Socialist offshoot. The various myths took shape with uncanny rapidity. One can see plainly that the indirect impact of Asian thought acted more as a catalytic agent for the crystallization of Germany's deepest instincts than as an outright influence on its own merit—so true it is that alien influence can hardly do more than awaken tendencies which are already present potentially.

This is made plain by the fact that a few generations before, these

very tendencies had already emerged into German consciousness. The Germans sensed that the French Revolution symbolized the end of French supremacy in Europe. In his *Fourth Speech to the German Nation*, Fichte sought to awaken the pride of Germany writhing under Napoleon's iron dictatorship. He declared that all comparison between the petrified neo-Latin tongues and the still-fluid Germanic languages was pointless since the former were already dead. He added that "We, the Germans, alone are alive. We are the Primitive People, *das Urvolk,* the true People of God." The other nations, and especially the French, whose cultural supremacy had weighed heavily on Germany in the past centuries, were the "non-People" and this was a fact, "not on account of the language, nor on account of history nor for racial reasons, but because of a metaphysical necessity."[6] Psychologically speaking, the grounds were well prepared for an enthusiastic reception of Indian cultural influence.

The Oriental Renaissance was now going to fuse these three Teutonic reactions—anti-Classicism, anti-Semitism and Pan-Germanism —into one spectacular movement destined to shatter Europe in the twentieth century. The synthetic urge which the Germans share with the Indians drove the former onward relentlessly, toward the common "source" of all religions, all philosophies, all poetry and all myths. With it, of course, the dangerous notion of relativity was bound to emerge from this confrontation between East and West— not just relativity in the Vedāntic sense of degrees of metaphysical reality emerging from illusionary *māyā* (the true ancestor of modern *scientific* relativity), but *historical* relativity. In the early days, some optimistic souls chose to believe that Christian metaphysics, petrified since the Reformation and the Council of Trent, could once again become dynamic. Schlegel contended that Christianity had "barely started" and the French Roman Catholic Joseph de Maistre accepted the idea of a "Third Revelation." Contact with the history and thought of India was bound to instill into European thinking the fundamental notion of the absolute relativity of all forms, doctrines and symbols—although plenty of room was still left for those who clung to a belief in the unalterable superiority of European Culture. Schlegel, Eckstein and the French priest Lammenais adopted the idea that the Indians had true metaphysical perception and could be included within an enlarged and more broad-minded Church. Even here, the Germanic yearning for synthesis and a mo-

nistic *Weltanschauung* took the lead in this effort at the "ingathering" of the whole human race. But there was only scant following in the rest of the Western world.

Pan-Germanism and not a European religious awakening was to benefit from this Oriental Renaissance. As we already know, the philosophic insight of Germany's Orientalists became marred almost immediately by a semi-poetic, semi-prophetic twist which fused objective truths and subjective myths into a hopeless mixture, an inextricable jumble in which the Indian *Vedas* rubbed elbows with the *Nibelungenlied* or with old Celtic legends. The German worship of the forces of the unconscious, the deep-rooted preference for a negation of individuality bordering on a collectivism that had inspired them to sing the praise of Gothic man's anonymous culture as opposed to the Classical Renaissance's frenetic individualism, all this paved the way for their enthusiastic reception of the hundreds of thousands of anonymous Vedic *slokas:* there, at last, was the confirmation of their thesis on the anonymous character of creative genius. Latin individualism was now metaphysically defeated with the help of Indian culture, and full justification for the *Sturm und Drang* was plucked out of Indian soil. History was reclassified and reshaped: the Indian *Vedas* took place alongside Homer and the *Nibelungenlied,* the latter being to European Culture what Homer was to Classical Greece—the first ghostly contours of the cyclical outlook on history were shaping up.

The gradual destruction of Christianity's supremacy, already under way for generations, opened the floodgates no longer to the urbane and rationalistic "Enlightenment" of eighteenth-century French culture, but to a double movement of quasi-religious proportions with prophetic overtones: Feuerbach's anti-Christian materialism leading to Marxism and twentieth-century Communism, and the metaphysically ordained superiority of the "Aryan-German" leading to Pan-Germanism and twentieth-century National Socialism—two aspects of the reaction produced by India's impact on a European Culture on the threshold of historic decline. This Oriental impact was felt at the very time when many of the more vigorous thinkers of the West were becoming tired of the naïve rationalism of the eighteenth century, and were yet unable to revert to traditional Christianity. Therein lay the colossal tragedy of the modern West and the basic source of the cultural impasse reached in the twentieth century.

Before coming to the crude application of profound philosophical

thought to politics in the twentieth century, it is essential to trace the intellectual gifts of Indian culture to German philosophy. In particular, Hegel's debt to Indian thinkers for the very basis of his whole logic is considerable;[7] he himself acknowledged that his dialectics had Indian precedents, and we know what considerable part the dialectic system played throughout the long development of Indian philosophy, especially the dialectics of the Mādhyamikas, the school of the great Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna. This was much later strongly emphasized by the great Soviet Russian Orientalist Stcherbatsky,[8] and we know what debt Karl Marx himself owed to Hegel.

But in addition to Hegel and Marx, Germany was to produce two more first-rate thinkers who were both under the spell of Oriental cultures, men who crystallized, each in his own way, the mental schism of the West. Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche emphasized "will" as being the very basis of man's life and thought—Schopenhauer to condemn it and Nietzsche to glorify it, but both of them setting it up on a special pedestal and thereby formulating and summing up the prime motivating power behind the growth of European Culture. Both of them owe incalculable debts to Indian and Persian philosophies.

Schopenhauer was a profound pessimist who extracted from Indian philosophy its contempt for the mere intellect—"a parasite of the rest of the organism, inasmuch as it does not intervene directly in the latter's activities but only serves a purpose of self-preservation by regulating its relations with the outer-world."[9] In his first phase of Orientalism he admitted extracting his philosophical outlook from the Vedānta and attempting to weld "empirical realism" with "transcendental idealism." Admitting that "will" is the primary manifestation of the universe, he cursed this cosmic will-to-live, attempted to formulate a therapeutic doctrine for the elimination of man's suffering, and denounced individual existence as a mere illusion. A true German wedded to the unindividualistic East, he added that only Ideas and not the individuals have any true reality, since only Ideas can claim to be the objective materialization of Will.

His doctrine took on additional firmness and precision during the second phase of his Orientalism, which dates from his acquaintance with Buddhism—his true historical parallel, the doctrine of a Culture's twilight, the equivalent of the Stoicism of the Classical Greco-Romans. Schopenhauer found a true spiritual brother in Gautama, both of them offspring of exhausted societies on the eve of their met-

amorphosis into Civilizations. Schopenhauer went on from there to vindicate Indian philosophy's rightful place in the world and adopted for his own the contempt for history that was consistently displayed by the Indian mind. He even went so far as to express pleasure at the continuous failure of West-Christian proselytism in Asia and added: "Our religions are not and never will take root in India: the primitive wisdom of the human race will not let itself be deflected from its course by an episode in Galilee."[10] His anti-Christianism was largely based on a fierce anti-Biblism; every great thing produced by Europe along mystical or metaphysical lines, he attributed systematically to subtle influences originating on the "holy banks of the Ganges."[11]

As the nineteenth century drew to a close and lassitude began to cripple European Culture, Buddhism, in its original end-of-Culture shape, began to take precedence over the more emotional and dynamic Hinduism. More than one perceptive thinker made the parallel between Gautama's Great Doctrine and the skeptical, agnostic outlook of the European West. Auguste Comte's Positivism is "but Buddhism adapted to modern civilization; it is Buddhism in a slight disguise,"[12] claimed a famous scholar in the 1880's. Schopenhauer himself recapitulated and symbolized this change of feeling during the forty years which separate the two parts of *The World as Will and Idea,* his masterpiece. With him, world-negating mysticism began to seep into the West, corroding insidiously its intellectual vitality and its belief in its destiny, contributing to the increasing demoralization that affects all Cultures on the threshold of decline. It encouraged those who fled from a life of struggle, those who felt dissatisfied with Western values, and progressively undermined the will and courage of many souls who, eventually, could no longer resist the fanatical onslaught of other dynamic creeds.

From the debilitating mystical attitude adopted by Schopenhauer to the ardent and ruthless prophetism of Nietzsche, there is a tremendous gap. The main theme of Nietzsche was borrowed from Zoroastrian Persia; but the aphoristic style, the trans-logical and almost religious tone is definitely derived from Indian sources. The effort to shock the reader through unexpected paradoxes and thus get beyond the mere intellect links up far more readily with the philosophies of *transformation* than those of *information*. Rejecting the whole Jewish tradition by declaring it traitor to the more vigorous tradition of Zoroastrian Persia—and no longer as Schopenhauer had,

for debasing the purely mystical message of India—he fought savagely against the Hebrew atmosphere of humility and fearful submission to the curse of Original Sin, against its specifically Christian development of charity toward the "botched and the weak." He propounded the doctrine of the "transvaluation of all values," the absolute necessity of getting beyond good and evil—again, this monistic trend so evident in the whole of German philosophy as it is in Indian philosophy, this contempt for mere morality which, inevitably, entails ultimately crass immorality in human affairs. We have traced India's cynical philosophy of politics to this monistic attitude; Germany's cynically ruthless policy in the twentieth century can be traced to the same source, as symbolized by its nineteenth-century philosophers.

In his *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche advocates the creation of a healthy aristocracy, describes what a true nobility should be, and has this to say about India:

. . . in the case of the unique natures of noble origin, if by virtue of superior spirituality they should incline to a more retired and contemplative life, reserving to themselves only the more refined forms of government (over chosen disciples or members of an order), religion itself may be used as a means for obtaining peace from the noise and trouble of managing *grosser* affairs, and for securing immunity from the *unavoidable* filth of all political agitation. The Brahmins, for instance, understood this fact. With the help of a religious organisation, they secured to themselves the power of nominating kings for the people, while their sentiments prompted them to keep apart and outside, as men with a higher and super-regal mission.[13]

This was an idealized version of the Indian social system, but was close to the ideal it had actually set up. And one can see how, in conjunction with his doctrine of the superman, this could affect his German admirers. Nietzsche was essentially a creator of genius who could no longer remain confined within the narrow boundaries of the traditional ethics of the Christian West; he was conscious of the fact that Western Culture was reaching a dead end, that the ossification of Civilization was looming ahead and that the old Western limitations were to be overcome if Culture was to be revived again. All he did, in fact, was to contribute to a destruction that was going on steadily and help release blind forces of destruction within the heart of Europe.

Nietzsche was as highly conscious of history as Schopenhauer was

not. He explained himself, in the introduction to his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, that he "had to do a *Persian* the honour of identifying him with this creature of my fancy. Persians were the first to take a broad and comprehensive view of history."[14] Thus, instead of inveighing, as did Schopenhauer, against the whole prophetic strain in the name of pure mysticism, he split it wide open, separated the Semitic from the Persian component and glorified the immense vitality of the latter. But the rest of his philosophy can be traced far more readily to India. Concern for the "masses" he has none, and the reading of history's profound purpose dictates that "the object of mankind should lie in its highest individuals"; and to their rearing, the masses should be sacrificed. It is not difficult to see that such a theory can be extended with the greatest ease to the "higher races" as a whole (which, however, Nietzsche himself would never have acknowledged). It becomes easier to see now that the twentieth century, carrying the profound philosophies elaborated in the nineteenth century to their logical conclusions, extracted political dynamite out of them. The "higher races" were eventually presumed to be entitled to enslave for their collective benefit the "inferior races." And what National Socialism did with respect to Nietzsche's superman (identifying him with the German nation and people as a whole), Lenin did when he extended Marx's notion of the proletariat as a *social class* to proletarian *nations*. They both debased and yet extended immensely the scope of philosophies that had meaning when originally propounded but became tragically absurd on the gigantic scale on which they were applied politically in the twentieth century.

From Hegel and Marx, and then Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the road began to decline precipitously; philosophy came down to the level of crude popularization, which in turn shaped the coming policies of the twentieth century. The Germans always have to justify their actions on philosophical and metaphysical grounds (and so do the Russians, who were under the intellectual spell of the Germans); the spadework was now done, the great philosophies elaborated and without rival, since the Anglo-Saxons and the Latins had become remarkably sterile in that respect. Popularization could then start. Marxism found its great popularizer in Lenin, who combined within himself the roles of theoretician of Communism and its actual revolutionary head, all in one. Pan-Germanism, the other monster issuing forth, found its main theoretician in Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

It was in his major work, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century,* that Pan-Germanists of all persuasions found the best ammunition, and that Adolf Hitler found the substance of his *Mein Kampf.* Chamberlain's work shook Germany at the turn of the century and prefaced the coming of National Socialism; its references to India are most illuminating and explain a great deal of his general thesis. After having extolled the profundity of Indian philosophy and praised Hindu mysticism, he added that "the Indologists were the real humanists of the nineteenth century." And from lengthy considerations of the incomparable merits of the Aryans—which he had already examined in his *Arische Weltanschauung*—he finally stressed the theory of the "absolute" differences between the various human races alive in the contemporary world and of the absolute incompatibility between them. His theory attempted to do what the excesses of India's caste system had in fact done: destroy the *unity* of the human race. After all, did not the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* state that the breed of a Caṇḍāla outcaste was so degraded that it was ranked with that of the dog and the pig?[15] The notion of a modernized, *Western* caste system began to take shape in Germany with the theory of the lowly *Untermensch* (Slavs, Semites and colored races) and their eventual, historically preordained subservience to the superior Aryans.

How this concept could arise is plainly stated in *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century:* "Nature and history reveal to us a great number of various human beings, but no such thing as humanity. Even the hypothesis that all these beings, as the offshoots of one original stem, are physically related to each other, has scarcely so much value as Ptolemaeus' theory of the heavenly spheres. . . . The notion 'humanity' is, to begin with, nothing more than a linguistic makeshift."[16] This problem being out of the way, he pursues in the same vein: "Our present civilization and culture are specifically Teutonic, they are exclusively the work of Teutonism."[17]

Having thus summarized his thesis, it becomes all the more interesting to see how his understanding of Indian culture affected the Pan-Germanist author. He states that "The brilliant series of Teutonic and Indian scholars has, half unconsciously, accomplished a great work at the right moment; now we too possess our 'holy books,' and what they teach is more beautiful and nobler than what the Old Testament sets forth."[18] Germany annexes Indian culture mentally and thus frees itself of all cultural debt to Jews and Latins. Of course, he extols, time and again, the profundity of Indian thought: "Indian

thought is unsurpassed in depth and comprehensive many-sided-ness."[19] Many more encomiums follow: they redound, indirectly, to all Aryans. How in India, of all places, did this unique cultural flowering come about? Because of the purity of race: "In Ancient India, of course, there were ascetics; but they might not disappear into the solitude of the forest till the son of their son was born. . . . we see that only one thing contributes to the ennobling of man: the begetting of pure races."[20] He then adds the fundamental note whereby the inherent lack of individualism of the Germans finds in its Indian counterpart a full metaphysical justification. To uphold his contention that "man cannot fulfil his highest destiny as an isolated individual . . . but only as a portion of an organic whole, as a member of a specific race," he quotes a passage of Sāṁkhya doctrine which states that "The individuals and the whole are identical":[21] this, of course, is the inevitable result of the monistic tendency which is shared by Indians and Germans alike. And so, one begins to see how the welding of Indian elements to the deepest instincts of the Germans gave to the latter the metaphysical, and also historical, justification for their grisly behavior on the scene of world politics.

Germany entered the twentieth century psychologically conditioned to carry out in practice the conclusions reached by its nineteenth-century thinkers. Defeat in the First World War was an unexpected and stunning blow which set the Germans thinking again. They went back to the past and wondered what had gone wrong—not toward a democratic past, in the Latin or Anglo-Saxon sense, which had never existed in German experience, but toward a mythological past contrived by German thinkers and popularizers. While Oswald Spengler painted a somber picture of the collective doom of the Western world and acknowledged Nietzsche for his master, Thomas Mann led a new revolt against reason and intellectualism in the name of spiritualism. The former predicted with considerable foresight the approach of the European dictators; Thomas Mann expressed just as eloquently his contempt for the values of the Latins and Anglo-Saxons.

But the cultural decline had already started in Germany, and these men were not going to lead the coming German revolution; they merely closed an era and found themselves unable to influence politics directly. The seeds sown by their predecessors had already begun to bloom at the end of the nineteenth century. Around 1890, Pan-

Germanism left the world of scholars and thinkers to come down into the political circus; the Allgemeiner Deutscher Verband was started in 1891. The First World War defeat, far from putting an end to the movement, accelerated the pace. The thinker who then had the greatest impact on the world of politics and who symbolized the mood of his time to perfection was Moeller van den Bruck. In his prophetic work *Das Dritte Reich,* he outlined the coming German revolution, the "revolt of the instinctive forces against the absurd tyranny of reason," the correct utilization of the inevitable catastrophes looming on the historical horizon. Borrowing Richard Wagner's statement on the "subconscious rising to new consciousness," he claimed with Nietzsche that the true revolution would weld together Life and Reason (implying a subordination of Reason to Life). His historical perspective was the same as Thomas Mann's: Western civilization (Latin and Anglo-Saxon) was doomed because it was artificial. The Slavic East was young and strong but formless and chaotic. Germany was the middle land, the synthetic agent between an aging West and a youthful East, and its true destiny was to carry out this synthesis.

With this new crop of writers and thinkers, the anti-rational, perverted romantic impulse ruled supreme. Germany's coming revolution would truly be the most irrational and destructive explosion known to history—and, in the process, would shatter the heart of Europe. It was going to rank alongside the pseudo-rational Marxist upheaval as one of the prime phenomena of the twentieth century. The Oriental Renaissance was bearing bitter fruits, and it is still an open question whether all this could have happened without the discovery of "Aryan" India in the nineteenth century. It acted as a catalytic agent, helping the ultimate liberation of all those forces that cluttered the collective unconscious of the West, and opening the floodgates to all the horrors of the Second World War.

Looking at the whole scene from the serene height of complete objectivity and detachment, a Western psychologist has observed that there was more than a coincidence in the fact that Anquetil-Duperron began to unveil the baffling mind of India about the time of the French Revolution. He added that "he brought the Eastern mind to the West, and its influence upon us we cannot as yet measure. Let us beware of underestimating it! So far, indeed, there is little of it to be seen in Europe on the intellectual surface. . . . These

manifestations make us think of tiny, scattered islands in the ocean of mankind; in reality they are like the peaks of submarine mountain-ranges of considerable size."[22] And as the seas of Western Culture dry up progressively nowadays, these Oriental mountain ranges are looming increasingly large on our horizon.

INDIA AND THE WORLD

Decline and Fall of the Colonial World

LORD CURZON'S Great Durbar in 1903 was a magnificent symbol of European colonial power at the zenith of its splendor—a display of Oriental and European pomp that recalled the great days of the Moghul Empire. The long columns of swaying elephants covered with cloth of gold and dazzling ornaments marching from Delhi's Red Fort to the Great Mosque, the State Ball in the Moghul Emperors' *Dewan-i-Am,* where the British officials and lords contrasted their sober elegance with the gorgeous dresses of maharajahs and nawabs—everything was designed to strike the imagination of East and West alike. The great Empire seemed impervious to the destructive power of time. The entire Indian Ocean was a British lake; East Africa, the south coast of Arabia and the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Nepal and Tibet, Malaya and Australia, all were in British hands or under British influence—or about to be—and surrounded India like a protective belt. Around India, the most precious gem of the British crown and keystone of the whole colonial structure, gravitated satellite empires—French, Dutch, Portuguese—all dependent on the great Indian keystone and the ubiquitous power of the British fleet.

But history teaches that the road to decline and fall is always much steeper than the road uphill, and that it usually starts when pomp and apparent power are at their very zenith. This was undoubtedly the case with the colonial world as an imperial dependency of Europe. The first half of the twentieth century saw a last upsurge of European colonialism and the exceedingly fast collapse of the great structure under the shattering impact of two European civil wars. But even in the first years of the twentieth century, even at the time of Lord Curzon's Durbar, there were signs of impending trouble, subterranean rumblings, threatening noises. Until the end

of the previous century, some unfathomable magic seemed to protect Europe's colonial world, a magic power that had even fettered the dreaded *Kāla*, Time, which had disposed of all other previous empires but which, as it seemed, stood now powerless against these new types of empires ruled by remote control from the other end of the earth.

Suddenly, quite suddenly, the magic charm no longer worked. Something went wrong in the European timetable and the quick-witted Indians began to feel intuitively, if they did not perceive it intellectually, that some mortal foe was lurking within the European world itself, ready to strike at the heart of the colonialist powers and destroy their far-flung structures. Too weak to shake off European domination unassisted by some external agent, the colonial world began to search with utmost eagerness for some such agent, and the very fact that the *idea* of an end to their subjugation began to grow in Indian consciousness, in itself sealed the fate of European colonialism. The mere idea that the Westerners were not invincible after all, that they themselves were increasingly dissatisfied with a civilization that had given them such immense power, was a sop to the humiliated East. But the evolution of the colonial structure itself was a primary cause of this swift weakening that started early in the twentieth century: the growing centralization of colonial administrations, the increasing control by the European home countries of their colonial possessions, the inevitable economic developments of the colonies and the rise of Asian elites adapted to their modern environment, and the consequent tensions developing steadily between colonizer and colonized, everything conspired to create an increasingly unstable situation.

Everything goes together; and when the mind is ready, opportunities come knocking at the door. As rebellious ideas began to penetrate into the minds of the increasingly frustrated men of tropical Asia and as the first inklings of a budding nationalism made themselves felt, political developments within the world of the colonial powers themselves handed them the first opportunities. Nothing shook Asian public opinion as much as the defeat of Tsarist Russia at the hands of the Japanese, a defeat so unexpected and startling that it resounded throughout the Orient like a thunderclap. What was hailed throughout the East was not so much the defeat of Russia as a nation, as the defeat of the *Westernized* Russia and of its ultra-conservative ruling class. Toward Russia, as such, they had no spe-

cial feelings; but in the Tsarist defeat they rightly saw a mortal blow struck at the whole colonial spirit of the West which Tsarist Russia had so well assimilated.

But this was only a forerunner, a portent of greater upheavals to come, of the overwhelming experiences of two World Wars that were fought mainly in Europe and laid bare its weakened heart, destroying in a few years the tremendous accumulation of material power and cultural prestige developed over hundreds of years of world supremacy. The whole Western world was shaken to its foundations. Impoverished Europe, perennially unable to organize itself and unite, saw the growing internal dissensions of the white races develop as a mortal disease, whereas in past centuries it had been a source of stimulating competition. The "have-nots" of Europe with their taut muscles and youthful dynamism were bound to strike at the wealthy "haves" who had become soft and flabby from excessive opulence wrung out of their colonial possessions. They all destroyed each other in the end, reducing Europe to the status of global battleground in the middle of our century.

Colonial prestige was decisively shattered by those upheavals within the Western world. The Asian nationalisms that sprouted all over the colonial or semi-colonial domains of Europe became the most obvious signs, not so much of Oriental strength as of Western weakness. Worse still, but inevitably, psychological doubts began to assail the minds of the West, casting shadows over their former self-righteousness and self-assumed predestined superiority. As uncertainty grew within the seats of colonial power in Europe, exuberant determination increased all over the colonial world, rattling the chains of political bondage, throwing back at the West all the liberal speeches and writings extolling the virtues of democratic self-government and free determination for all people, that had poured out of London and Paris for generations.

The European colonial powers had sat on several branches simultaneously—on their intellectual and artistic predominance as well as on their social, political, economic and military superiority. Most of them were sawed off by the West itself with almost masochistic frenzy: two world wars disposed of Europe's *military* and *economic* superiority, while the basic contradictions between their professed political creeds of democracy and self-government, on the one hand, and their actual policy in the Orient, on the other, destroyed the *moral* bases of their imperial power. As far as Asia was concerned,

the blatant failure of West-Christian proselytism disposed of the *religious* predominance, while the *intellectual* supremacy collapsed into the chasm that had opened between the Franco-British and German philosophical outlooks. Perhaps the most portentous symbol of this cultural decline was Russia's full retreat from Westernization after the Soviets seized power in 1917, into a Pharaonic form of compulsory industrialism.

Most of the Asian nations were hardly more prepared to shoulder the great responsibilities of self-government in the middle of the twentieth century than they were fifty years earlier. But the European powers were no longer able to carry out and enforce their colonial ambitions. Their alleged desire to bring about self-government in the colonies, ultimately, was taken up by the Asians with increasingly self-confident garrulousness—and the increasingly uncertain, intimidated European powers withdrew with more or less good grace. The downfall of European colonialism was far more the result of Western abdication than of increasing Asian strength.

The last straw was, of course, the Japanese offensive in 1941. Striking south with lightning speed, the Japanese destroyed European colonial prestige for all times. The vague hope, expressed afterward by leading European statesmen, that the old order could be somewhat retrieved was based on a complete misreading of history. With their relatively scant forces facing hundreds of millions of Asians in full revolt, the various Western powers proceeded to intrigue against each other and destroy what was left of the colonial structure. The immediate postwar period saw the British and the Americans virtually prepare the downfall of the Dutch in Indonesia, the British organize the downfall of the French in Syria and Lebanon, the Spaniards intrigue against both the French and the British in the Arab world, the French transport their internal quarrels to postwar Indochina and then weaken themselves in a hopelessly bloody colonial war against the Vietnamese. In this amazing process of self-destruction of the West, one can hear echoes of another age, which witnessed the downfall of Classical Greece's colonial world, an age that exudes the pungent scent of another self-willed disintegration: "Isocrates is probably right when he claims that the curse of Hellenic politics at this time was the desire for empire. Athens, Sparta, Thebes, Phocis, all in turn strove for supremacy, and as each state mounted on the crest of fortune, it was pulled back into the trough by its jealous rivals. Even Epaminondas of Thebes, the ablest and

most disinterested soldier of his age, could not see beyond Boetia, and was incapable of great political combinations."[1] Once again, more than two thousand years later, Europe found itself in the trough of the tide of fortune, and no longer on its crest. More than the colonial downfall itself, its orgy of self-destruction was the sure sign of a grave mental trouble, of paralyzing self-doubt due to the collapse of its cultural values.

Long before this came to pass, however, storm signals had been hoisted; but they were not read by Western statesmen. Nowhere else were those signals so much in evidence as in India, the keystone of the entire colonial structure. India set the pace of Oriental nationalism. As long as India was in political tutelage and accepted its bondage meekly, Asian nationalism in the modern sense of the word was unthinkable. On the other hand, an India dedicated to the struggle for national freedom and self-government gave inspiration to the rest of the colonial world. And a free India after World War II gave the signal for the final, decisive breakdown of European colonial rule. The internal stirrings of the vast Indian subcontinent were of momentous importance to the rest of colonial Asia, the shining example even though Indian methods of non-violence were not duplicated elsewhere. This vast land still retained the prestige of its ancient civilization, its massive populations and potential wealth, its sophisticated elites and its profound philosophy. It had been for thousands of years the sun-like source of culture for the Moonlight Civilization of Southeast Asia and remained, even after their mutual downfall under the successive impacts of Islam and the West, the leader to whom they looked for guidance in modern times.

Ever since the days of Macaulay's reforms in the 1830's, all higher education in India had been conducted in English. Anglomania became the fashion among the social and intellectual elite, whose derision of their own Indian culture was a token of their Europeanization. A strange Anglo-Indian world came into being in which all things Western were adopted with enthusiasm by the more progressive-minded Indians: books, newspapers, dwellings and clothing, everything changed under the cultural impact of Europe. Leading Indians had warmly encouraged this trend: Rāmmohun Roy had given the signal, and thousands followed in his wake, mostly Brāhmins such as Ramtanu Lahiri, who embarked on careers devoted to the diffusion of European culture. Newspapers such as the *Gyanu-*

neshun (*Search After Knowledge*) or the *Bengal Spectator*, societies such as the famous Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, were all started in view of this attempted Europeanization of India's elites. The British authorities worked with them, hand in hand. In 1854, a Department of Public Instruction had been created in every province to give financial assistance to educational institutions run along European lines. But something went wrong, or rather many things went wrong, and the whole movement reached a dead end by the end of the nineteenth century.

Although it gave rise to a genuine Anglo-Indian culture, this wave of Anglomania also produced generations of young Indians who found themselves rootless, out of touch with their own country and its enduring culture, yet unable to compete with the British in their own language and their own techniques. Right away, this new educational system was weighted down by an almost exclusive emphasis on literary pursuits, as distinct from scientific and technical instruction. A wild scramble for academic distinctions was the inevitable consequence of the social prestige attached to European education, regardless of its practical use. The Royal Commission of 1882 saw all this quite clearly but failed utterly to alter the course of a vast movement flowing along under its own momentum. The gap between the British-educated upper classes and the rest of the population increased steadily. Yet, for all its defects, it is this education and the use of the English tongue that gave actual coherent *unity* to India. If this had not happened, if the British, in a more diabolic mood, had concentrated on developing the vernaculars, there is no doubt that there would not have been *one* Indian nationalism, but *several*; no doubt that the local loyalties of Bengalis and Punjabis, Marāthas and Gujratis, Tamils and Telugus, would have taken the upper hand and destroyed the fabric of all-Indian unity that developed under British auspices. In spite of everything, modern India was molded by this European education and tightly united by the use of English. It became, long before the end of the nineteenth century, the lingua franca of the subcontinent; all the proceedings of conferences on all topics and in all parts of India were conducted as a matter of course in English.

It had been Macaulay's aim to train a large class of men who would be "Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect,"[2] who would stand between the British and the illiterate masses and become the spokesman for both. By

the end of the nineteenth century, it was clear that they were neither. Something unforeseen was then beginning to happen: the revival of the vernaculars, and a resurgence of Indian culture *outside* the framework of English education. A significant incident had happened in Macaulay's time when a British member of the Committee of Public Instruction had suggested teaching partly in Bengali and had been overruled by the Indian members, who stated that "anything said or written in the vernacular tongue would be despised in consequence of the medium through which it was conveyed."[3] The only acknowledged languages of culture had hitherto been Sanskrit and Persian; English was now going to replace them. The vernaculars had been deemed unfit for anything except the crude expression of popular folklore. These vernaculars had really had their start in the thirteenth century when Muslim rule established itself in northern India and, by dissolving the academies, dispersing the scholars and persecuting priests, disrupted Sanskrit learning—this very Sanskrit which had, in post-Asokan India, overcome to a certain extent the numerous Prākrits, and now again faded in front of the descendants of these Prākrits: for instance, Bengali derives directly from the Māgadhī Prākrit, just as Italian derives from Latin, and flourished under the Moghuls while the official language, Persian, remained confined to the courts and a small intellectual elite. And Sanskrit, having ceased to be a living language after the Muslim conquest, became as dead as Church Latin. The modern vernaculars would not die, however, and, in fact, soon began to develop literatures of their own. Social prejudices against them began to disappear among many members of the Indian middle classes, while the enduring enthusiasm of the upper classes for English education persisted.

These developments in the nineteenth century set in motion the groundswell that was going to revive the purely native culture in the twentieth century—that on which Indian nationalism was going to take its stand. By the time of World War I, there were over 38,000 private institutions of learning, the overwhelming majority of which consisted of Hindu and Muslim schools (*tōls, pathshalas, madrassas* and *maktabs*). Western medicine had made great progress and Western-trained medical doctors were in great demand; but the great majority of practicing physicians were *kavirajes* and *hakims,* practitioners of the traditional Ayurvedic technique, preferred not only by the masses but often by the upper classes as well. And early

in the twentieth century it became plain that pride in the ancient cultures of India was reviving as fast as revulsion against exclusive Western learning was increasing. Disappointment with Western education had been growing steadily, caused mostly by the high expenses entailed without compensating return on the investment. The emphasis on literary accomplishments (European, that is) and the relative absence of technical training were luxuries that few Indians could afford.

From this new sentiment and from the existence of thousands of primary and secondary schools teaching in the vernaculars the traditional arts and sciences of India, arose a new type of higher education that was almost purely Indian (except for strictly technical matters). One by one, Hindu and Muslim institutions came into being, devoted to rescuing India's great cultural heritage from oblivion: the great universities at Benares and Aligarh, the Hindu Academy at Daulatpur, the numerous educational institutions of the Ārya-Samāj in the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, Rabindranāth Tāgore's famous school at Bholpur, the Osmania University in Hyderabad (Deccan). The days when a man like Michael Madhusudan Dutt could boast that he even dreamed in English were long gone.[4] Most leading Indians felt a new pride in Indian culture, and many echoed the thoughts of Sir Rashbehary Ghose when in 1911 he supported the establishment of a Hindu university: "Education must have its roots deep down in national sentiment and tradition. . . . We are the heirs of an ancient civilization, and the true office of education ought to be the encouragement of a gradual and spontaneous growth of the ideals which have given a definite mould to our culture and our institutions. . . . In our curriculum, therefore, Hindu ethics and metaphysics will occupy a foremost place, the Western system being used only for purposes of contrast and illustration. Special attention will also be paid to a knowledge of the country, its literature, its arts, its philosophy and its history."[5]

A year before, a voluntary, non-official organization in Madras called the Council of Indian Education urged that education be conducted in the vernaculars; fifteen years later, in the middle of World War I, an Indian member of the Imperial Legislative Council, Rama Rayaningar, took up the same theme and urged that the vernaculars become the main medium of instruction. And in 1919, Rabindranāth Tāgore himself laid bare the feelings of most Indians when he claimed with justice that English education occupied all

the available space in the Indian mind and "kills or hampers the great opportunity for the creation of a new thought power, by a new combination of truths." A genuine Indian education was needed, one whose ingredients would be assimilated "as organic things similar to our own living tissues." And he concluded that "For India to force herself along European lines of growth would not make her Europe, but only a distorted India."[6] And so, gradually, the ground was being prepared for the coming *political* nationalism by a resurgence of *cultural* nationalism that attempted to loosen the steely grip fastened on Indian elites by the overpowering culture of the West. Two years after Tāgore's statement, an even more violent attack against Western culture as a whole symbolized the changing attitude of the Indian intelligentsia; Jitendralal Banerji clamored that "English learning may be good; English culture may be good; their philosophy may be good; their government, their law, everything may be good; but each one of these but helps to rivet the fetters of our servitude. Therefore I say to the English, good as these things may be, take them away; take them away beyond the seas, far off to your Western home, so that we and our generation may have nothing to do with them—may not be accursed with the contamination either of your goodness or of your evil."[7] This was the old Hindu all over again, the Hindu who is above all conscious of being polluted by contact with impure *mlechchas* and their doubtful culture.

To this reaction, institutions such as the Ārya-Samāj, old by now, added their contributions. The loyalty of the Ārya-Samāj to British political rule had always appeared doubtful; what was certain was its uncompromising hostility to all non-Hindu cultures. It remained staunchly Hindu even though it was impregnated with a dynamism that was a direct result of the British impact. For instance, Munshi Ram, one of the leaders of the Ārya-Samāj before World War I, closed the active period of his life and, under the name of Swami Shraddhananda, began to lead the typical life of a *sannyāsin*.[8] But instead of retiring into mystical contemplation, as he undoubtedly would have in the old days, he joined the *shuddi* movement, which aims at reconverting to Hinduism the Muslim descendants of converted Hindus—thus making it plain that a rejuvenated Hinduism could not help coming into conflict with non-Hindu elements in India.

The pattern is by now quite clear. This cultural movement pre-

pared and then accompanied the political nationalism which was arising. More than that, it conditioned its shape. Forgetting, or wanting to forget, that the real unifying element in India was precisely English culture, many leading Indians carelessly stimulated the dividing forces that could tear India apart again; they awakened all the dormant centrifugal forces that lay deep in India and had been laid to rest by the unifying action of the British. They encouraged the profound cultural cleavages that split the Hindus from the Muslims. While the Hindu University of Benares became a hotbed of virulent Hinduism, Muhammad Iqbāl in the Punjab and the Osmania university in the Deccan revived the glories of Urdu and of Muslim culture. And it would be impossible to omit the Akali movement, which although confined to the Punjab gripped most of the Sikh community. They also awakened the cultural separatism of the various provinces by reviving the vernacular literatures: Bengali, Hindi, Oriyā, Marāthī and all other vernaculars derived from Sanskrit flourished, each in its own way; and the revival of Dravidian vernaculars of the south (Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam) was linked with violent anti-Brāhmin movements (chiefly in Madras), adding further to the fissiparous tendencies always present in India. The whole development of Indian nationalism in the twentieth century has been conditioned by this cultural movement, which was all too lightly dismissed as inconsequential by the political leaders.

The most potent and dangerous centrifugal forces threatening to tear India apart in any nationalistic awakening was the Muslim one. A correct reading of the past would have given to the leading Hindus a better understanding of the most baffling problem confronting them: the presence of eighty million Muslims on the very soil of India. Former rulers of the subcontinent, the final transference of Indian sovereignty to the British crown after 1857 had deprived the Muslims of their last shadow of power and waning self-respect. But they never thought of themselves as Indians (nor at the time did the Marāthās, Bengalis, Punjabis, etc., whose loyalty was local and not national). They were, first and last, Muslims who looked to Mecca and Medina in Arabia, even if they happened to be located in Benares, the "Mecca" of Hinduism. They had their own Vatican, the Dar al-Ulum at Deoband, which dispensed the traditional wisdom of Islamic scholasticism as it had ossified centuries ago. But to the Muslim elite of India (the descendants of the conquerors, the

Ashrāf, rather than the masses of *Ajlāf,* the descendants of converts from Hinduism) the changes that had taken place in the nineteenth century had been truly galling, especially in view of the much swifter adaptation of the quick-witted Hindus to the requirements of the new industrial age.

Farsighted leaders such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān made bold attempts to Westernize Indian Islam by raising the level of scientific education, by reverting to the old rationalist interpretation of the Koran of the Mu'tazila school and by turning its back on the rest of the Islamic world. Sir Sayyid opposed any allegiance to the Ottoman Caliph, sought to dispel the prevailing anti-British feelings of the Muslims and founded Aligarh College, the first Muslim institution in India to be run on Western lines. Upholding Sir Sayyid's rationalistic interpretation of Koranic wisdom that proof of Islam's truth lay in its "conformity to nature," Aligarh soon earned the opprobrious epithet of *nechari* and incurred the wrath of the founder of the nineteenth-century Pan-Islamic movement, Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, who from Cairo wrote his violent treatise (*The Refutation of the Materialists*) against it: "*Nechariya,*" he claimed, "is the root of corruption, the source of uncountable evils and the ruin of the country. . . . The *Necharis* present themselves before the eyes of fools as the standard-bearers of science, but only give a wider range to treachery."[9]

In closer contact with European power and culture than Middle Eastern Islam, it was inevitable that Indian Muslims would be the first in the great Islamic consensus to attempt an adjustment between the two alien cultures. After all, the Hindus had paved the way and demonstrated the necessity of such a "modernization." The scathing denunciations of Middle Eastern Muslims did not break Aligarh, quite to the contrary. But the whole movement was caught in a tight web of inner contradictions from which it could not disentangle itself. If Indian Muslims turned their back on international Islamic solidarity, they were eventually faced with the prospect of becoming fullfledged citizens of a united India, that is, a powerless minority in a land they used to rule as absolute masters—a sheer impossibility. In fact, this movement was nothing but the intellectual awakening of the higher social classes of Indian Islam. It failed to reach a significant number of Indian Muslims, who remained, for the most part, impervious to any changes.

Sir Sayyid was by no means the only reformer; the reformist spirit

was animating all those who came in close touch with European life in India. A number of other distinguished Muslims attempted to adapt Islam to the new civilization of the West as the Persianized Brāhmins of Bengal had attempted to adapt Hinduism. Muhammad Shibli founded the Nadwat Al-Ulema of Lucknow, introducing literary and historical criticism into its Islamic studies and adapting contemporary Western philosophy to Islamic orthodoxy. There were also fundamentalist reformers and reactionaries such as the Sirat movement and the Ahl-i-Hadith; but on the whole the trend was toward a more rationalistic interpretation of Muslim theology and philosophy—such as that of the Shia theologian Sayyid Amīr 'Alī, who worked out a liberal apologetic which had great influence, not only in Muslim India, but all over the Islamic world. His idealistic *Spirit of Islam* is still a classic of modernism, even in Egypt, and stands as one of the pillars of contemporary Muhammadanism.

This intellectual awakening was bound, sooner or later, to percolate down into the world of action and politics. Powerful societies (*anjumans*) sprang up for the service of the Muslim community; an influential Muslim press was started to parallel the Hindu press. Thought soon became action, and proselytism followed. The famous Ahmadiyā Movement that spread all over the Islamic world was started originally by Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad of Qadian in the Punjab.

At the time, such movements did not affect the Muslim masses of India any more than the Brāhma-Samāj had affected the Hindu masses. But they all prepared, unconsciously, the rude realities of the twentieth century. Indian Islam was put on the defensive from the start by the very fact that the nimble-minded Brāhmins were soon able to control the sinews of modern power in India—banking, trade, industries—and took the initiative of starting nationalistic movements. This, gradually, brought out the fact that Hindu and Muslim nationalisms were fundamentally opposed. While the Hindus could uncover their past at home, on the very land on which they dwelt, the Muslims looked *out* of India to recover their Arab, Turkish or Persian roots and retain their pride as former conquerors. The great bulk of the Muslims who were really converts from Hinduism were asked to identify themselves with their leaders of alien origin, and they mentally resumed their position as foreign invaders firmly settled in India by right of conquest but unwilling to merge with the Hindu masses.

The gravity of the problem, however, lay beyond this. First of all, the Hindu-Muslim conflict was not merely a *religious* one in the Western sense of the word; it was a *cultural* one as well, a clash of alien civilizations that could only be reconciled if they had been both completely superseded by a new one—the Western, for example. But the reverse happened: all their antagonistic characteristics, dormant for many generations, were quickened to new life by Hindu and Muslim reformers. Among these characteristics, the concept of national allegiance was one of the most important. A genuine Muslim nationalism arose among most Muslim communities in India, which was still rooted in the old concept of Islamic Civilization: a nation is equated with a community of faithful (be it Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Armenian, Maronite, or any other), with a "consensus" (*ijmā'*) of faithfuls devoid of geographical location or *spatial* boundaries. In the traditional Islamic view, states were always multinational; nations could coexist in the same space and yet be entitled to all the privileges of autonomous nationhood. And while the Hindus and Sikhs felt that their nationalism was rooted in the soil of India irrespective of religious creeds (a concept of nationalism wholly new to India and borrowed from the West), the Muslims clung tenaciously to their old concept but eventually modernized it so as to include a definite geographical formation carved out of India: that was the mental origin of the modern state of Pakistan. The formation of this new country belongs to the same order of political phenomena as the formation of the state of Israel in 1948: the settling down, on a geographically delimited portion of land, of nations which both clung until then to the old Middle Eastern notion of rootless nations tied to *time* and not to *space*.

It must always be kept in mind that Indians, just as Chinese or other Asians, do not look upon the world as we Westerners have done since the Renaissance. Their world outlook, whatever it may be, is an *all-inclusive* one, a coherent picture of which no part is detachable without entailing the destruction of the rest. We tend to see science, philosophy, religion, ethics, literature and every other segment of human culture as separate, autonomous compartments independent of one another. The West has become culturally atomized and assumes this temporary historical condition to be a normal and permanent one. But India, like China, had gone through such a phase several centuries before Christ and had overcome it. And no

more than China did India as a whole succumb to the dangerous lure of Western cultural atomism. It is therefore essential to keep in mind that, however regressive the cultural revolt of India against Western influence, this revolt was justified on a sound basis: it was an instinctive revolt that few Indians could rationalize intellectually but that was essential for the psychological health of India, whose soul would have been destroyed utterly if Indians had given in without reservation. It was not only an effort to preserve or recover India's forgotten culture; it was the instinctive urge to retrieve a monistic, all-inclusive *Weltanschauung* which they could not discover in Western culture.

We shall therefore find that all the great movements of our century, in India as elsewhere in Asia, are all-inclusive movements, grounded at first on a blind revolt against the forcible imposition of a Western culture that is finally rejected, and then on a search for a new world-outlook in which ethics, economics, social structures, politics and religion are all bound together. Rejection of Western culture was inevitable once their instincts had told the Indians that, in its present state, it would be poison for them. In the 1830's, Macaulay had poured scorn on Asian cultures: "A single shelf of a good European library he held to be worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia," claimed a British scholar, later on.[10] Less than a century later, the process of revulsion against Western culture started in earnest. It was not an easy thing, since the West still held an almost complete monopoly of the technical power and knowledge wherein lay that form of modern strength which could not be gotten out of the *Upaniṣads*, nor, for that matter, out of any other piece of old literature. As K. M. Panikkar stated in the early 1920's: "Without being consciously aware of it, our thought is dominated by the West. Hating it with all our heart we may not yet get away from it."[11] Hate there had been for over a generation, already, and it was only a matter of time before the hated culture would be thrown out completely—as soon as the political and technical requirements of modern industrial society could be gotten from some other, non-Western source.

Alongside this cultural development in India itself, another development in Britain took place that was partly responsible for it. If we take a bird's-eye view of the Anglo-Indian relationship before and after the turn of our century, the psychological evolution becomes plain: it was based on an instinctive feeling of the Indians

that Britain's great days were over. This psychological evolution that took place all over the Orient and affected, in fact, all the colonizing Westerners and the colonized Easterners, gave the final impetus to Indian nationalism. Had this basic weakness of their overlord not developed with such swiftness and come out in such bold relief, Indian nationalism might have smoldered for many more generations instead of blazing into a mammoth revolt. But as British power began to wane and the intrinsic power of India grew (increasing education, growing financial independence from the mother country and fast-developing industries), the whole machinery of imperial domination began to groan under the burden. The customary subservience of the educated Indians began to wane and a measure of self-assurance crept in. As the whole industrial and commercial structure of Britain slowly coagulated, foregoing the dynamic changes and progress that had characterized it through the early nineteenth century, a certain rigidity also began to paralyze the imperial machinery. Noted in the good old days for its comprehensive astuteness, political flair and adaptability to empirical conditions, Britain's political and economic leadership began to deteriorate.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw British industry reel under the heavy blows of competition by German manufacturing, younger, more dynamic, more progressive and harder-working. This evolution had already been foreseen, decades earlier, by penetrating minds: Stanley Jevons, as early as 1866, with his prophetic work on *The Coal Question;* and twenty years later the Report of the Royal Commission, which warned British industry that foreign competition was fast increasing and that it was time to gird Britain's economic loins. But the warnings were not heeded. The sun began to set on the mighty global empire as British goods began to be priced out of one market after another; and the prestige of the imperial race slowly melted away. India took a hard and slightly amazed look at the first evidence of decay—and the first signs of political nationalism began to bubble up to the surface of Indian consciousness.

A year after Lord Curzon's Great Durbar, Japan destroyed Tsarist Russia's might in the Far East. Those who doubt that this had a decisive influence on the course of Asian nationalism in general, and Indian nationalism in particular, should study carefully the first violent manifestations of Indian nationalism. The anti-Western cultural reaction had already been in full swing for a number of years

when a form of political terrorism began to sweep over Bengal in 1906, shortly after Japan's victory. The ostensible cause of this movement was the administrative partition of Bengal decided upon by the British authorities without regard to the feelings and local patriotism of the Bengalis. Then, states the memorandum of a knowledgeable Bengali who had studied the whole movement with great objectivity, "Into these black depths of despair, we are next told, there suddenly fell a spark of light. Japan, an Eastern nation, had flung aside the tyranny of the West and had gloriously vindicated her right to unfettered independence by her victory over Russia. Henceforth a new hope—the hope of liberty and independence—burned with a bright flame in the soul of Bengal."[12] Nothing shows more clearly the remarkable interdependence of political events in the various countries of Asia and the West.

Japan's victory was the flame that lighted the powder keg; but the powder keg itself was of strictly Indian manufacture. Recruitment into the revolutionary organization was confined entirely to young Hindus of the middle classes. Their training was conducted along religious lines; the adepts were enjoined to practice Brāhmacharya, study Vivekānanda's collected letters known as *Pathrabali*, and go through all the motions of a young religious *śiṣya* receiving instruction from a *guru*—with the difference that the *guru* was in fact a revolutionary political leader. But even so, expressed in the language of political violence, the fundamental feelings were those of men hankering after a revival of their ancient culture. Intense dissatisfaction with the moderate Indian political leaders, who proved powerless to make any significant progress, was rife at the time and it was easy to rouse the enthusiasm of Bengali youths—especially at a time when Western weakness was being so startlingly revealed.

The founder of the movement was Bepin Chandra Pal, but its real animator, who "aspired to work out for the whole continent that liberation of the human spirit which Bepin Chandra Pal was accomplishing in Bengal," was Aurobindo Ghose, better known later as Sri Aurobindo, one of the great mystics of modern India.[13] In the analysis of the spirit of this movement drawn by a Bengali scholar, one can see quite clearly the sentiments that animated its followers, sentiments that were also widespread throughout the rest of India. Referring to Aurobindo Ghose, he claims that

the aspirations of Young India were in his writings, a divining in-

tention of the spirit of liberty, the beating of whose wings was being heard over Asia; an exaltation, an urgency, a heartening call on his countrymen to serve and save the Motherland, an impassioned appeal to their manhood to reinstate her in the greatness that was hers. Had she not once been the High Priestess of the Orient? Had not her civilization left its ripple-mark on the furthermost limits of Asia? India still had a soul to save, which the parching drought of modern vulgarity threatened daily with death. . . . Was India to deform herself from a temple of God into one vast inglorious suburb of English civilization? . . . India must save herself by ending the alien domination which had not only impoverished her body, but was also strangulating her soul.[14]

This excerpt describes in flowery language very real feelings and provides the link between a certain form of religious sentiment and political action. The revolutionary Bengalis were at the time the most articulate, if not the most orthodox, exponents of an awakening Hinduism in the process of becoming political. Some of their leaders, the fiery Barindra Kumar Ghose in particular, heaped ridicule and contempt on the head of the "constitutionalists," those moderate leaders who worked along strictly constitutional lines. Helped by a violent vernacular press, inspired by the call to action and strength of Vivekānanda (and distorting it to suit their purpose, in the process), they also made good use of a mythological history in which pre-British days were pictured as the golden age. They attacked not only Britain but Europe and Western culture generally, and more often than not with some degree of perspicacity. One of the striking features of the movement is that it found a great deal of inspiration in the *Bhagavad Gītā*—into which they read much of what they fancied, as Gandhi was to do later, although in a very different manner.

Members of the revolutionary societies (the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, for instance) held regular classes devoted to the study of the *Gītā*, and all its martial features were brought out and drummed into the heads of the disciples. The greatest political extremist of them all, Bāl Gangādhar Tilak, explained: "The most practical teaching of the *Gītā*, and one for which it is of abiding interest and value to the men of the world with whom life is a series of struggles, is not to give way to any morbid sentimentality when duty demands sternness and the boldness to face terrible things."[15] Emphasis was

at all times placed on energy, strength, vitality. Somehow, the moral aspect was not stressed, in keeping with the true monistic tradition of Indian philosophy; but the vitalizing influence of religion was always in evidence, and nothing illustrates better the deep connection between Vivekānanda's preaching and this revolutionary movement than a small booklet, *Bhawani Mandir*, believed to have been written by the mystic Aurobindo Ghose himself. Dedicated to Bhawani (also known as Kālī), the Infinite Energy, it urges Indians to become strong and gives them a glimpse of India's destiny: "The deeper we look the more we shall be convinced that the one thing wanting which we must strive to acquire before all others is strength —strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual, which is the one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all others."[16] And it goes on to claim: "India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. . . . It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Rāmakrishna came and Vivekānanda preached."[17] And it was Vivekānanda's own brother, Bhupendra-nath Dutt, who edited the magazine *Yugantar* (*New Age*), which encouraged the cult of violence quite openly.

This intrusion of religion into politics was inevitable because any profound movement in such old civilizations as India has to be all-inclusive. In this *Bhawani Mandir* one can see all the ingredients of the traditional Indian outlook quickening to new life: the filiation with Rāmakrishna and Vivekānanda, the emphasis on the acquisition of strength to an extent that is almost amoral (which was proved by the terrorist activities of its revolutionary devotees), the intense pride in India's world destiny to "Aryanize" the world and the synthetic outlook aiming at a reconciliation of all the cultural antagonisms between sciences, religions and philosophies, introduced by Western culture.[18]

The sporadic revolutionary activity in Bengal could not and did not shake the foundations of British power; but it was an ominous portent of things to come. It struck the imagination of the young,

who were becoming impatient with the lack of results achieved by the moderates and the constitutionalists, all those who had grouped themselves around an organization known as the Indian National Congress. Started in 1885 by an Englishman and a number of prominent Indians, Congress remained for a long time a lawful body, criticizing the government but with moderation and dignity, essentially loyal to the British throne. It advanced the claim that India's intellectual elite was entitled to represent the country's uneducated masses, a claim that was virtually rejected by the British authorities. Disappointed, Congress decided to arouse public opinions in India and Britain, and achieved moderate success. But the quickening tempo of world political developments outstripped the moderates and encouraged the awakening spirit of outright opposition to the government.

A new leadership soon developed, headed by the famous Marātha Brāhmin whose commentary on the *Gītā* we have already noted, Bāl Gangādhar Tilak. For the first time, a man of stature attempted to arouse a strong national feeling among all Indians by appealing to their sense of the historic past. Animated by the pugnacious spirit of the Marāthas, Tilak's action was vitiated from the start by his reactionary attitude in social matters: he belonged to a generation that looked backward rather than forward. He clashed with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the moderate leader, because of the latter's reasonable attitude in political matters, but he also opposed the Age of Consent Bill which aimed at suppressing the evil of child marriage. He even re-established the annual festival of the elephant-god Ganesa for the benefit of the Marāthas, just as the Tantric ritual in Bengal was revived by his ally, Bepin Chandra Pal. Buffeted by cross-currents in the first years of the twentieth century, torn between revolutionary radicalism and conservative reaction, Congress became paralyzed. This age, Britain's Edwardian sunset, was a time of uncertainty in Europe, a time of ominous calm preceding the First World War, a historic watershed. The Indians did not know exactly what to do or where to turn until Europe itself gave the signal by sliding down the path to historic decline.

But it would have been naïve of the Hindus who led the Congress organization to think that a wave of nationalism based, as we have already seen, on a resurgence of ancient Hindu elements, could take place without frightening the Muslims. The cultural chasm which had opened up earlier when the denomination colleges and other

institutions of higher learning were started, now gave signs of becoming political. Facing this "New Nationalism" based on a specifically Hindu resurgence, the Muslims answered by setting up their own organization. In 1906, Nawab Salimullah of Dacca started the Muslim League and showed right away to what great extent be differed from Congress by upholding the British decision to divide Bengal and by opposing the boycott of British goods. It would have been equally naïve of the Indians to believe that the British authorities would not use this unique opportunity to apply the "divide and rule" policy.

The British were faced with continuing revolutionary activity in Bengal, which repression, and the arrest of Tilak and other radical leaders, had failed to check. Encouraged by the display of Muslim separation from the Hindus, they decided to grant the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909, associating qualified Indians with the government. On this memorable date, it can be said that the decline of British power in India started and went on continuously until final independence was granted in 1947. But at the time it looked like an ingenious device to split up the Indians by creating separate electorates for Muslims, thus treating the Islamic community as a separate nation on Indian soil.

Behind the cultural and political agitation, some momentous changes had begun to alter the social and economic landscape of India. A number of factors had steadily increased India's power at the expense of Britain. One of them was the rebirth and development of Indian industries after 1860, when the duties on imported machinery (enacted by the British in fear of a competitive industrialization of India) were at last removed. Machines promptly came in, followed by British capital in search of profitable investments that could no longer be made in the aging economy of the home country. A vast movement toward industrialization was started: jute industries in Bengal, cotton mills at Ahmedabad and Bombay, mining in the Deccan, and then heavy industry.

As this economic expansion needed financing, Indian capitalistic power grew steadily, along Western lines, and was soon able to dominate certain manufacturing centers to the exclusion of the British—especially in textiles. Then came the foundation of the giant steelworks of Jamshedpur in 1911; they had reached such colossal proportions, two decades later, that they were the largest in the entire

British Empire. Upper and middle classes expanded, became wealthier, better educated in the modern sense, and increasingly powerful and were steadily moving economically and financially out of the British orbit. The Parsīs of Bombay became steel magnates and through their vast industrial combines controlled coal, some transportation and many minor industries. Men from Gujarāt and Kāṭhiāwār who had been traders and manufacturers since time immemorial awoke to their new historico-economic circumstances and threw themselves with determination into the economic development of a continent which the British could no longer hold back. The Mārwāri caste from Rājasthān provided the financial network, becoming the greatest bankers and moneylenders in the land, while the Chettys of Madras asserted their economic domination over South India and Burma. They all played their parts in financing and bolstering the nationalist movement while the British magnet began losing most of its former power of attraction. And, as if this was not enough, an economic offensive was started by the Bengal revolutionaries in 1906: *Swadeshi,* the use of indigenous.goods at the exclusion of imports from Britain. This was a body blow aimed at Manchester. Quite naturally, politics followed economics: along with *Swadeshi,* came *Swaraj,* demand for political self-government at the 1906 session of Congress.

Indian economic and financial power gave concrete assistance to this nationalist awakening; but behind it was an increasing feeling of frustration, intense disappointment and a by no means negligible amount of contempt for their rulers, as if the repeated blows suffered by the British and the West in general, the slow economic paralysis crippling Britain's old industrial establishment and the general demonstration of doubt and weakness hitherto unsuspected, reflected on the Indians as much as it did on the British. Nothing can be more disappointing than the sudden discovery that a hero whom one had placed on a pedestal is unworthy of the honor and reveals himself to be no hero after all. The evident signs of an increasing moral, intellectual, political and social uncertainty in a Britain that had been so sure of itself throughout the nineteenth century, and had provided the baffled Indians with a coherent structure of civilization in which they could believe, was a terrible blow to all concerned.

In the twentieth century, Anglomania and admiration for the West collapsed dramatically; Indians saw their modern sun set slowly behind a horizon of doubt and confusion, leaving them, as it

were, in a lurch, forced to a great extent to grope back into the darkness of their own civilization. The admired teacher had been proved wrong: he had been slipping behind the technological improvements of German and American industries, whereas he had formerly led the parade of progress. He was soon to be severely challenged by Japanese industrial progress. He was eventually to engage in a colossal World War that would leave him largely prostrate and which proved beyond a shadow of doubt that European Culture as a whole was mortally sick, and that Britain, in particular, would be unable to retrieve its former greatness. In other words, this was almost a betrayal of the sacred trust placed in the British by admiring subjects for which there could be no forgiveness. The floodgates to a massive revolt of India, and of the whole colonial world, were now open—and not merely against Western colonial rule but against Western Civilization itself.

Metamorphosis of India:
Gandhi and the Revolt of the Masses

WORLD WAR I was a conflagration of unimaginable magnitude by the prevailing standards. In essence, it was a gigantic civil war of the West, which started in 1914, continued in World War II, and wrought the destruction of European power, in Europe as well as throughout the world. It unleashed the vast movement which transferred the center of gravity of the West from Europe to America. It wrenched Russia from the fold of Western Civilization and made it into an impregnable bulwark in the center of the Eurasian land mass from which powerful impulses radiated to the four corners of Asia and energized anti-Western nationalisms. And it destroyed the great moral and intellectual prestige hitherto enjoyed by the West in the East. From then on, European power in Asia was on the defensive, fighting sporadically rear-guard actions aimed at retaining as much political and economic power as possible. But ever since European culture had begun to be rejected, everything else European was bound to follow suit, including political and economic power.

On the eve of the Great War, India was in an uncertain mood. Anti-Westernism was already rampant on the cultural plane and political liberalism was attempting to loosen slightly Britain's absolute political domination. But, by and large, Indian loyalty to the political connection with Britain was as firm as ever. Nothing can give us a better picture of the feelings of Indians before the war, and of their change of attitude subsequently, than the words of India's two most eminent men at that time: Rabindranāth Tāgore and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Throwing a wistful glance on those days from the vantage point of the year 1941, Rabindranāth Tāgore gave a remarkable description of the alteration in sentiment

that had taken place in his generation: "As I look back on the vast stretch of years that lie behind me, I am struck by the change that has taken place. . . . our direct contact with the larger world of men was linked up with the contemporary history of the English people. . . . the educated of those days had recourse to English language and literature, their days and nights were eloquent with the stately declamations of Burke, with Macaulay's long rolling sentences; discussions centered upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry and above all upon the large-hearted liberalism of the nineteenth century English politics. At the time, though tentative attempts were being made to gain our national independence, at heart we had not lost faith in the generosity of the English race. . . . certainly the spirit of abject dependence upon the charity of our rulers was no matter for pride."[1]

Tāgore then goes on to describe the strangling effect of the Hindu caste system degenerating into "socialized tyranny" and added: ". . . in place of these set codes of conduct we accepted the ideal of 'civilization' as represented by the English term. In our own family this change of spirit was welcomed for the sake of sheer rational and moral force and its influence was felt in every sphere of our life. Born in that atmosphere, which was moreover colored by our intuitive bias for literature, I naturally set the English on the throne of my heart. Thus passed the first chapters of my life. Then came the parting of the ways accompanied by a painful feeling of disillusion when I began increasingly to discover how easily those who accepted the higher truths of civilization disowned them whenever questions of national self-interest were involved."[2]

The parting of the ways occurred slowly and gradually, although World War I gave it a tremendous impetus. A great deal of it had its inception in the social contacts between ruled and rulers, strained as they were by the genuine feeling of racial superiority which most northern Europeans feel in the Orient. Years later, Jawaharlal Nehru (speaking for the Indian upper classes and not the masses, who could not have cared less) wrote that "since Hitler emerged from obscurity and became the Führer of Germany, we have heard a great deal about racialism and the Nazi theory of the 'herrenvolk' . . . but we in India have known racialism in all its forms ever since the commencement of British rule. The whole ideology of this rule was that of the 'herrenvolk' and the Master Race, and the structure of the government was based upon it."[3] But he might have also

added that India had known it since the very dawn of history and had, in fact, almost invented racial discrimination. Gandhi, with his lucid honesty, admitted as much when he stated: "We have segregated the *pariah* and we are in turn segregated in the British colonies."[4] Such a rule as the British had established was perfectly in tune with the prevailing concepts on which Hinduism, in its caste structure, was based—the most formidable and enduring example of racial discrimination known to history. The British in India set themselves up as a super-caste sitting on the summit of an already elaborate pyramid of castes, dedicated to and specializing in political government as each caste specialized in its own specific field of activity. The only drawback from the Indian point of view—and the one that was going to be decisive—was that the center of gravity of this new super-caste was situated abroad, at the other end of the globe, and was forever immune to assimilation by India.

We must now listen to Gandhi as he looked back at his own past: "My public life began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and as an Indian I had no rights. More correctly, I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian. But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticizing it freely where I felt it was faulty but never wishing its destruction." He then went on to explain that, from the Boer War until 1918, he offered his services to the British Empire and received a number of awards in recognition for the numerous services rendered; he added: "In all these efforts I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen."[5] Then came a succession of "shocks" that brought Gandhi "to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically."[6]

Regardless of the objective merits of these various statements—which, no doubt, were partly exaggerated—there was enough truth in all these observations to warrant a serious re-examination of the entire connection between Britain and India. What might have taken fifty years to accomplish under normal peacetime conditions was tremendously accelerated by the war. Matters were brought to a head in a few years, and all those connections that had been taken for

granted for so long were re-examined in the light of new conditions created by the European conflict. It should be realized that India's assistance during World War I was considerable: a volunteer Indian army of over a million men added to the regular army of almost 300,000 who fought all over the world in Europe, Africa and the Far East; great financial contribution to the war effort; considerable supplies of munitions, large supplies of foodstuffs, raw materials and even manufactured goods. All this constituted a moral mortgage on British rule in India, and Indians expected to be rewarded for their loyalty and devotion; and this was so strongly felt in Britain that Lord Hardinge came to the conclusion that the object of British rule in India should at last be defined. It soon was: in 1917, Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, made a famous declaration to the House of Commons stating that British policy aimed at associating an increasing number of Indians to the administration and that the final goal was the establishment of responsible government in India. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report came out in 1919, and its reforms came into application in 1921. The British who effectively ruled India at the district level knew full well that this was the beginning of the end; Edwin Montagu was told as early as 1917 that "the Indian Civil Servants were very sorry that their day was done; recognized that it was inevitable and were willing to go ahead."[7] But another thirty years were to elapse before full independence came, thirty years of training on both sides: training the British to leave as graciously as possible, training the Indians to take over as efficiently as possible.

This new type of government became known as the Dyarchy system, under which Indians came increasingly to substitute for British officials, an era that lasted from 1919 to 1937. From 1919 onward, the very structure of administration at the level of the district officer began to change so obviously that the humblest Indian peasant could notice, for the first time, that the Anglo-Indian government was evolving into something new. These reforms coincided with the beginning of the revolt of the Indian masses.

One might have thought that the British were moving fast enough to placate most Indians and start paying back the ethical mortgage contracted during the war. But this was not the case. Great social and economic changes had been wrought by the war. The Muslims, for the first time, carried out a *rapprochement* with Congress; and the war atmosphere itself had contributed the exceptional powers of

repression of the government, enabling it to act without legal procedure in political cases. It was this latter factor that set the spark which was going to create a revolutionary atmosphere in India in such a way that British concessions always came too late to satisfy the Indians. These exceptional powers of repression had been required to keep control of the Bengal revolutionaries, some of whom had been in touch with the Germans during the war. Exceptional powers soon become an acquired taste, and facing an evident rise of nationalistic spirit, the British authorities sought to perpetuate these powers through the enactment of the Rowlatt Acts in 1919, "a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom," claimed Gandhi.[8] Whatever the merits of the case, the Indians construed the Acts as an unforgivable display of ingratitude for all that the Indians had been called upon to do during a war which was, basically, none of their business. From then on, India's struggle for political freedom was on.

The war itself had generated other revolutionary movements— wars and revolutions being usually self-generating. Many Indian Sikhs were caught in the *Ghadr* conspiracy that had originated among the Sikhs in America, some of whose members had made contact with German agents and whose revolutionary activities had been effectively put down thanks to the exceptional war powers granted to the government. Times had changed and the rise of revolutionary activities had compelled the imperial government to stiffen its repressive powers—which in their turn added fuel to the revolutionary atmosphere. Little force was needed in the old days; a British district officer could administer his territory without having to use armed forces or even police at all, just as a Chinese mandarin could rule his appointed district without the assistance of any armed strength; moral strength and traditional prestige were usually quite sufficient. All this was now disappearing in the whirlwind generated by wars and revolutions.

India suffered and prospered simultaneously during the war— some wealthy became wealthier, many poor became poorer through the dislocation of normal economic connections. The industrial establishment developed greatly, but the standards of living of the rural masses declined. The dangerous increase in the population's birth rate added its painful effect to a war-created inflation. Vast transfers of capital from British to Indian hands took place. Such

thorough and quick upheavals in the structure of a vast and complex country like India were bound to create havoc with the imperial authority, virtually mortgaging British domination over India for the sake of a disastrous war against a European rival. For the first time, real discontent began to percolate down to the rural masses.

A revolutionary situation was thus in the making, one of much vaster amplitude than the sporadic revolt in Bengal ten years before —and, more important still, one that shook the bulk of the Indian farmers, who had long ago lost their most stabilizing crutch: the self-sufficient village economy and cottage industry that made them virtually independent of outside sources of supply. It was inevitable that an unspoken alliance would be established between the frustrated elites who had been turning away from European culture, the enriched middle classes who owed their increment of wealth and power to the war, who were flexing their muscles and wanted to taste political power—and finally, the mute but now discontented masses. Such an alliance, however, could not remain a mere formal link, a cold contract binding several self-interested groups. It had to be achieved within the person of one man who would be accepted as undisputed leader of the whole movement, who would synthesize it and give it the emotional impulse that was still lacking. Such leadership had to fulfill two basic conditions: it had to be imposed by the rebellious masses rather than chosen by the elites, and it had to be unmistakably religious in character. Whether India was fortunate in finding such a man in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is perhaps debatable. In any case, he was a perfect symbol of the times and was able to be the living, concrete embodiment of the contradictory emotions that were shaking the immense multitudes of his countrymen.

With the appearance of Gandhi on the political stage, and with the revolt of the Indian masses under his leadership, Indian history experienced a change of phase. The nineteenth-century renaissance in India, the great intellectual movements and the literary flowering, the genuine attempts at synthesis between East and West, the awakening of historical consciousness, all this came to an end. The masses were in revolt all over the world, including Europe. Hundreds of millions of men were on the march toward some revolution or other, and India was no exception. But the revolt of the Indian masses took place under different auspices, used entirely different and novel techniques, and were a landmark in the history of man's great political struggles.

The decline of European Culture was well on the way and it dragged down in a similar decline all those other derivative cultures which had flourished in its "Hellenistic" realms. In India, it became clear that as fast as nationalism arose, the old Indo-British culture receded. The age of the Roys and Tāgores was progressively coming to an end. With the advent of Gandhi started a slow but momentous reaction against the West and European Culture in general on a massive scale; what the intelligentsia had been dreaming about for over a generation now began to take place as the masses, still steeped in their folkloric culture, rose against British power. This reaction did not put a stop to the reforms and modernization of Hinduism's worst features, at least those that were not attuned to the modern world; but these reforms were now taken in hand by the living spirit of Hinduism itself without the assistance of the alien rulers. None of the great Indians blinked their eyes to the fact that Hinduism was monstrously corrupted. One of Gandhi's predecessors, the religious guide of the Bengal revolutionaries, saw it clearly for all his passionate attachment to Hinduism. Aurobindo Ghose claimed that "If an ancient Indian of the time of the *Upaniṣads,* of the Buddha, or the later classical age were to be set down in modern India . . . he would see his race clinging to forms and shells and rags of the past and missing nine-tenths of its nobler meaning. . . . he would be amazed at the extent of the mental poverty, the immobility, the static repetition, the cessation of science, the long sterility of art, the comparative feebleness of the creative intuition."[9]

One would think that such a clear vision of reality would have prompted Aurobindo to throw himself into some form of political or social action with renewed vigor. But, quite the contrary. After a spell in jail for his participation in the Bengal troubles, Aurobindo forsook politics and active life in general for a life of contemplation in his famous *ashram* at Pondicherry. As a man and philosopher of almost unfathomable depth (because he *lived* his philosophy even more than he expressed it), he was too steeped in the old Hindu culture to play a part in history. The mystical pull was too strong and he gave in to it, whereas Vivekānanda had successfully resisted it. His remarks on the contemporary state of Hinduism proved that his mysticism was not blind to historical realities. But it could not indicate the new paths on which Indian politics should tread.

The age of politics had now dawned on India and the field belonged to these religious men who believed in the *karma* life of

action, of service and selfless devotion to men. Such a man was Gandhi, although he was never really conscious of taking his place in the perspective of history; he was never aware of the reality of historical development at all; *time* as a substantial dimension was of no consequence to him. He always kept one eye on the timeless truth of religion and another on the temporary, unpredictable mood of India's masses, on the immediate *present* seen as a disconnected element. He attempted, and not always with success, to bind the two realms together, giving to the action of Indian nationalism a jerky, spasmodic and unpredictable movement which disconcerted both his British opponents and his own intellectual followers. But Gandhi had an uncanny, not to say mysterious, gift which kept him at all times in tune with the prevalent feelings and emotions of India's inarticulate masses. He was the indispensable barometer without which no disciplined and co-ordinated mass movement of India's unarmed populations could possibly take place. This strange man was an odd and entirely novel phenomenon in India, a product of transition stepping right out of the old ahistorical civilization of India without consciously desiring to enter the new modern world that was emerging inevitably. The same religious impulse that had abstracted Aurobindo from the world of politics drew Gandhi into it, and the old Indian yearning toward synthesis is evident in this man for whom every aspect of human or animal life was a manifestation of Immanent Truth: "My devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."[10]

Those who have been privileged to see him and talk with him can never forget this unprepossessing man who nevertheless radiated immense strength of character and unsurpassable authority. But with Gandhi it was the historyless masses of India who rose to political power and attempted to withdraw from contemporary history, to hark back to an immutable past. With Gandhi, for a time, Being eliminated Becoming. Political action did not take place in the continuous flow of time, but in a series of spasmodic *presents* unconnected with one another. But what Rāmakrishna had perceived as an urgent necessity toward the end of his life and which Vivekānanda initiated during his short passage on earth, Gandhi accomplished during his lifetime: the complete subservience of *contemplation* to *action* and service, the switch from the pursuit of one's own enlight-

enment to selfless work for other human beings. Both emotional *bhakti* and intellectual *jnāna* now gave way to *karma,* the discipline of pure, selfless action as taught by the *Bhagavad Gītā.* Gandhi himself stated his belief in the superiority of the man of action over all others: "Mere knowledge of right and wrong will not make one fit for salvation. According to common notions, a mere learned man will pass as a *paṇḍit.* He need not perform any service. . . . Or take *bhakti* . . . This *bhakti* . . . leaves the rosary only for eating, drinking and the like, never for grinding corn or nursing patients. But the *Gītā* says: 'No one has attained his goal without action. . . .' "[11]

Gandhi was well aware of the reluctance of the average Indian for a life of action. But, again, the *Gītā* came to his rescue and justified for him that life of action on proper metaphysical grounds: "Then how is one to be free from the bondage of action, even though he may be acting? The manner in which the *Gītā* has solved the problem is, to my knowledge, unique. The *Gītā* says: 'Do your allotted work but renounce its fruits—be detached and work—have no desire for reward and work.' This is the unmistakable teaching of the *Gītā.* He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises."[12] Justified on metaphysical grounds, Gandhi's preference for action over contemplation was quite natural; but it did not have to be *political* action; it could have meant a life devoted to social service, such as Vivekānanda's. But there again, historical circumstances warranted this change of direction. Forever anchored to his religious faith, Gandhi wrote: "The politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake. . . ." And he added: "I have been experimenting with myself and my friends by introducing religion into politics."[13] The results of such an explosive mixture were predictable.

With Gandhi, a new dynamism began to grip the whole body of Hinduism, increasing its momentum as it went along. He spoke to the masses of India in the language of timeless religious myths— which is the only one they understood—animated, revitalized and re-enacted all the symbolic dramas of the *Mahābhārata* as no intellectual *paṇḍit* ever could. He abstracted, in true Indian tradition, the element of *eternity* from *time,* sought for religious truth and not

historical significance. He himself wrote that "the *Mahābhārata* has a better message even than the demonstration of war as a delusion and folly. It is the spiritual history of man considered as an immortal being and has used with a magnifying lens an historical episode considered in his times of moment for the tiny world round him, but in terms of present-day values of no significance."[14] But like his predecessors, Gandhi brushed aside, or attempted to brush aside, all the monstrous growths that had sprouted on the protoplasmic body of Hinduism over the centuries, choking it like giant creepers strangling a mighty tree.

Gandhi's fanatical belief in *ahiṁsā*, "non-violence," was derived by a very unorthodox interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gītā;* in fact, this specific temper of his was probably due to a potent permeation of his whole being by the Jain philosophy of his native Gujarāt rather than to the more martial influence of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But this *ahiṁsā* is, to an extent, in the tradition of Hinduism itself, which has deliberately set itself out to decrease the vitality of its devotees—through starvation diets and taboos of all kinds—in order to keep them in line and avoid excessive temptations. Inheriting from Gautama Buddha's teaching its emphasis on the negative rather than positive aspect, Hinduism has encouraged its members to lower their vitality in order to eliminate temptations rather than run the risk of intense conflicts between vice and virtue. The static nature of *ahiṁsā* goes hand in glove with a certain form of moral turpitude, a certain cowardly flight from the dangerous struggles of life which has been overlooked by its admirers. Gandhi was not blind to this aspect of the thing and warned time and again: "I have often noticed that weak people have taken shelter under the Congress creed or under my advice, when they have simply, by reason of their cowardice, been unable to defend their own honour or that of those who were entrusted to their care. . . . Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave."[15] True enough, but the fact remains that this view of non-violence was an ideal, saintly one, and that its appeal for the masses lay rather in its passive and negative character. This vitality-sapping character of *ahiṁsā* was not conspicuous, because of the overwhelming numbers of Indians who made it a practical success in India—but it was plain in South Africa, where Gandhi tried it out for the first time and where it became such a patent failure that fifty years later the small Indian minority was in worse condition than it had been at the turn of the century.

The secret of Gandhi's power was precisely the fact that he expressed the unconscious desire of India's mute masses to return to the past rather than jump into an unknown future, to dig deeper into India's cultural soil in order to retrieve all that had been presumably lost under British rule. Gandhi had clearly understood the genuine talent of Indians for self-government on the local level: "India is really a republican country," he once wrote, "and it is because it is that it has survived every shock hitherto delivered. Princes and potentates whether they were Indian born or foreigners have hardly touched the vast masses except for collecting revenue. . . . The vast organization of caste answered not only the religious wants of the community, but it answered to its political needs. The villagers managed their internal affairs through the caste system, and through it dealt with any oppression from the ruling power or powers. It is not possible to deny of a nation that was capable of producing the caste system its wonderful power of organization."[16]

When he boldly advocated boycotting the British institutions of higher learning after the war, he brushed aside the objections of one of the last remnants of the great Indo-British cultural movement of prewar days, Rabindranāth Tāgore—the "Poet," as Gandhi called him with a faint touch of sarcasm: "In all humility, I shall endeavour to answer the Poet's doubts. . . . The Poet's concern is largely about the students. He is of opinion that they should not have been called upon to give up Government schools before they had other schools to go to. Here I must differ from him. I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training. My experience has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height. . . . I am firmly of opinion that the Government schools have unmanned us, rendered us helpless and Godless."[17] And he then went on to counter Tāgore's objections to the "negativity" of his non-co-operation by pointing out that he, Gandhi, was in the true Hindu tradition and Tāgore was not; and he concluded: "Let me close this part of my argument by drawing attention to the fact that the final word of the *Upaniṣads* (Brahmavidya) is Not. *Neti* was the best description the authors of the *Upaniṣads* were able to find for Brahman."[18] Tāgore, one of the last and greatest proponents of a cultural synthesis between East and West, was brushed aside because of his being too unfaithful to the traditional outlook of his native culture.

Gandhi was truly faithful to the spirit of Hinduism in many of

its manifestations, except for the excrescences which he wished to uproot. He has already been quoted in connection with the caste system, and he had recognized that, quite apart from the problem of the untouchables, caste had lost its democratic flavor in some areas and that matters should be set right. He added the following considerations: ". . . there appears to be no valid reason for ending the system because of its abuse. It lends itself easily to reformation. . . . I am inclined to think that the idea of heredity is an eternal law and any attempt to alter that law must lead, as it has before led, to utter confusion. I can see very great use in considering a Brahmin to be always a Brahmin throughout his life."[19] He added that transmigration always took care of misdeeds and misbehavior. More than that, Gandhi upheld the old Hindu idea of strict segregation between different groups and castes. He pointed out that "interdining and intermarriage have never been a bar to disunion, quarrels and worse."[20] The true nature of Hindu tolerance does not lie in a striving for conformity, as with the Chinese, for example; it lies in respect for the other's true individuality and independent personality. No one has preached Hindu-Muslim brotherhood with more fervor than Gandhi; yet he himself said: "I hold it to be utterly impossible for Hindus and Mohammedans to intermarry and yet retain intact each other's religion. And the true beauty of Hindu-Mohammedan Unity lies in each remaining true to his own religion and yet being true to each other."[21] This is the true greatness of the Hindu spirit, this tolerance based on mutual respect which is disappearing in every other land under modern conditions.

One of his last pronouncements after India's independence put the accent on India's universal mission. Shortly before his death early in 1948, he underwent a new fast to put an end to the communal disturbances that had resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives; and asking for brotherhood and understanding, he said: "The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige, and her fast-fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and thereby, the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world."[22]

Gandhi's first actions were deliberately limited in scope, trial balloons, and at the same time vivid demonstrations of his deep attention to the smallest details of human life. He never thought, as most

intellectuals do in India and elsewhere, of the "masses" in the abstract, but of the living individual human beings who made up these masses, each one of which was entitled to his full share of attention and regard. Refusing to lay down long-range programs and waiting for spiritual inspiration to guide him from day to day, his attention was drawn in 1917 by a minor affair: the plight of the sharecroppers in Upper Bihar. He left for the district and, after applying for the first time his technique of non-violent *Satyagraha,* his "firm grasping of the truth," to the great embarrassment of the authorities, won his case. His reputation spread all over India like wildfire and he returned to his *ashram* in triumph. From then onward, until he moved the resolution of *Purna Swaraj* (Complete Independence), Gandhi started to nibble away steadily at British power, prodding its weak points with feline persistency, increasing his immense revolutionary influence over the masses and transforming Congress into a formidable machine that would, one day, inherit the imperial authority of the British Raj.

Gandhi had started as a mere social reformer in 1917. In 1918 he was still loyal enough to the British authorities to engage in a recruiting campaign for the Indian army, confident that this display of Indian loyalism would earn self-rule for India. Then the climate seemed to change overnight; it suddenly dawned on many thoughtful Indians that Britain was by no means prepared to take such a step and that a struggle for national freedom was inevitable. Perhaps there was also a secret instinct that told the Indians that the time was ripe to strike, that the enemy was weak since the opponent was the British Raj in India rather than Britain as a nation, tired and exhausted by the war. Gandhi always acknowledged what he called his "strong point," that is, his uncanny instinct: "My instinctive knowledge of my material has given me a faith which cannot be moved. I feel within me that the material is ready. My instinct has not betrayed me once."[23] His material was indeed getting ready. And by an almost unexpected stroke of luck, for the first and last time, the Muslims found themselves in full agreement with Congress and the Hindus: Britain's war against Turkey was highly unpopular in India and led the Muslims to turn their backs on those overlords who had sought, a few years earlier, to turn them against the Hindus. In 1916, already, Congress and the Muslim League had concluded the Lucknow Pact, according to which Congress agreed to separate electorates, and both jointly framed a constitutional scheme in view

of obtaining dominion status. A vast movement was afoot among Indian Muslims to save the Turkish Caliph from being deposed. Known in India as the Khilafat Movement, this presented itself to Congress as a golden opportunity to unite the whole of India against the British, "an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Mahomedans as would not arise in a hundred years," said Gandhi with his usual perspicacity.[24]

Matters came to a head in 1919. The promulgation of the Rowlatt Acts stung the Indians, and Gandhi organized a passive-resistance movement in protest. Strikes, rioting and looting took place in various areas. The British bore down severely on the Punjab, the center of trouble, and, as was almost inevitable, a deplorable incident made reconciliation impossible: the gory massacre at Amritsar, where General Dyer's troops killed several hundred and wounded several thousand Indians, to be followed by the infamous "crawling order" that was construed all over the country as an insulting slap in the face of all Indians.

By now, Gandhi had seized full control of the revolutionary movement. The Indian masses sensed instinctively that here was a leader of a new type, a true holy man who was not content with refurbishing the religious trappings of the past but who *lived* the true spirit of what was best in Hinduism. At the Amritsar Congress in December, 1919, he took over completely from a now defeated and discredited Tilak, who was also present. The moderates (now known as Liberals) had been defeated and had withdrawn from Congress under the blows of Tilak; but now the cries that resounded were *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* ("Hail to Gandhi"); nothing was left for the old veteran Tilak but to withdraw in his turn and die—which he did obligingly a few months later.

The result of all these trends and events was the famous resolution of Non-co-operation at the Congress session of 1920. It was for the first time that India's oldest political weapon was brought out in the open, on such a massive scale. Non-co-operation was the dreaded social sanction applied against all those who violated caste rules; no violence was ever applied against them; they were merely shunned by one and all, left to rot away in utter loneliness until death ensued. This weapon was now applied to India's super-caste in charge of political affairs: the British. Gandhi himself was quite conscious of the value of the weapon—and of its dangers to those who wielded it: "Non-cooperation being a movement of purification is bringing

to the surface all our weaknesses as also excesses of even our strong points. Social boycott is an age-old institution. It is coeval with caste. It is the one terrible sanction exercised with great effect. It is based on the notion that a community is not bound to extend its hospitality or service to an excommunicate."[25]

The die was now cast. The Indian people as a whole no longer wanted to be ruled by the British caste. Civil disobedience and passive resistance spread from one end of India to another; thirty thousand men were arrested on political grounds, including many members of India's intellectual elites. In 1921, encouraged by the massive response all over the land, Congress decided to organize the movement and appointed Gandhi as leader. He was vigorously prodded into launching a huge all-India movement but, faithful to his own methods, he refused and decided to concentrate at first on the small district of Bardoli. Suddenly, there was an outbreak of bloody violence at Chauri Chaurā near Gorakhpur (United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh) and Gandhi called off the whole movement. Congress leaders were aghast and the rest of the country dismayed by such a decision which broke the back of the nationalist revolt. But Gandhi was adamant. Violence had been done, blood had been spilled, which proved that the people were not yet ready; an inner *transformation* would have to take place among the Indians themselves before they would become entitled to take their destiny in their own hands.

Gandhi was brought to trial in 1922 and never attempted to shirk his responsibility: "Thinking over these deeply and sleeping over them night after night, it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chaurā or the mad outrages of Bombay. . . . I should have known the consequences of every one of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire. . . . I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty."[26] The District Judge of Ahmedabad then read out the sentence and said: "Mr. Gandhi, you have made my task easy in one way by pleading guilty to the charge. Nevertheless, what remains, namely, the determination of a just sentence, is perhaps as difficult a proposition as a judge in this country could have to face. The law is no respecter of persons. Nevertheless, it will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am likely to have to try. It would be im-

possible to ignore the fact that, in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life."[27] In fact, it would also be impossible to overlook the great dignity of both the accused and accuser, and the extreme civility which, besides all the bitterness generated by India's struggle for freedom, always prevailed in the relations between Britain and India. Could one imagine such a trial taking place in Soviet Russia or Red China?

The undoubted nobility of Gandhi's behavior throughout the whole affair, unfortunately, was not rewarded politically. Shortly after, the Turkish Caliphate was abolished by Kemal Ataturk himself and the Khilafat movement collapsed in India. The temporary union between Muslims and Congress dissolved, and from 1923 onward, communal riots took place all over India, year in and year out. The Muslim League developed steadily and moved away from Congress; Gandhi's influence on the Muslims faded. Obsessed by their modern intellectual clichés, the leaders of Congress refused to see the magnitude of the problem and committed the irreparable blunder of attempting to divide the Muslims and wean them away from the League. They naïvely applied to the Muslims the policy of "divide and rule" which the British applied to India as a whole, and failed just as much in the end. The All-Parties Convention in 1928 turned down the demands made by Muhammad Ali Jinnah on behalf of the Muslims, and the following year, Jinnah held his own all-India Muslim Conference where the claims to autonomy of the Muslims were proclaimed. The breach was going to prove to be final.

An immense historical phenomenon himself, Gandhi had no more conception of and no more feeling for historical significance than the average Indian farmer. They both moved onward when their instinct told them that another imperial bastion was about to crumble, and thus onward, until there was nothing left of the disintegrating imperial structure. The final goal itself was never very clear, or rather, the goal was never, at any time, of any real importance to him. He, and the Indian masses with him, left it to the more articulate intellectuals to decide what the goals were. To him, the *means,* that is, the non-violent destruction of an increasingly weak and therefore unworthy imperialism, were always paramount. In his

view, a worthy struggle based on non-violence was ennobling and character-building. This psychological betterment was really all that mattered, and the aims could then take care of themselves: they were bound to fall in their lap.

Gandhi claimed that "non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honor, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration."[28] But this noble idealism did not always stamp Indian nationalism as a whole and did not always impregnate the leadership of Congress. Gandhi unleashed old atavistic strains that had been kept in abeyance throughout the nineteenth century and, by so doing, contributed unwittingly to creating a myth. The British Empire in India did not actually trip over Gandhi's nonviolence, although it was considerably weakened by it. It was really destroyed at the other end of the world—in Europe, where two devastating wars dissolved the very substance of Western power and prestige in the East.

Under Gandhi's leadership India carried out a full retreat from Westernization. Beginning in 1925, when he founded the All-India Spinners' Association and revived the antique spinning wheel, most of his moves were strokes of genius. Reviving the cottage industry made a greater contribution to the raising of the depressed standard of living than the limited industrialization that had taken place in the last hundred years—without taking into account the immense psychological uplift given to farmers who could now work profitably during the dead season of agriculture. This small-scale family textile manufacturing ended by producing more than all the highly mechanized mills and was directly responsible for the virtual ruin of the Lancashire industry—a strange, unexpected but not undeserved revenge of history.

But this retreat from Westernization assumed also more symbolic forms. After the resolution in favor of *Purna Swaraj* (Complete Independence) had been moved in December, 1929, "the whole look of Congress changed; European clothes vanished and soon only *khadi* was to be seen; a new class of delegates, chiefly drawn from the lower middle classes became the type of Congressman; the language used became increasingly Hindustani, or sometimes the lan-

guage of the province where the session was held, as many of the delegates did not understand English."[29] Gandhi's anti-Westernism found profound echoes among the Indian masses, and his various pronouncements left no doubt that he spoke for the great majority of his countrymen: "Western democracy is on its trial, if it has not already proved a failure. May it be reserved to India to evolve the true science of democracy by giving a visible demonstration of its success. Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be the inevitable products of democracy, as they are undoubtedly today."[30] But, going much further than a mere retreat from Westernization, Gandhi advocated the impossible solution of stepping out of the industrial age altogether. As early as 1909, he had written: "India's civilization consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the last fifty years. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and suchlike all have to go; and the so-called upper-classes have to learn consciously, deliberately and religiously the simple peasant life, knowing it to be a life giving true happiness."[31] Needless to point out, the future has not blessed Gandhi's wishes and India has been dragged, willy-nilly, into the vortex of the industrial age.

In the long run, and in a political sense, however, victory was Gandhi's. Many of his ideas, wise in the abstract, were not applicable to any country in the modern world. But they seduced India's hundreds of millions, who had only a distant glimpse of the material benefits of the industrial age; and they were compelling enough to humble many members of the upper classes into coming back into the Indian fold and forsaking, at least to some extent, their Westernization and the comfort that went with it. A wave of puritanism, part sincere and part hypocritical, swept over India and stiffened the nationalist movement. In the end, success was mostly due to Gandhi's ability to set in motion many of the dormant elements of Indian culture and root this modern nationalism in the immeasurably deep soil of India's old civilization.

XVIII

The Rise of Congress

GANDHI fought the British, not to get beyond the historical stage represented by British imperialism, but to fall back behind it and destroy the very notion and consciousness of history that was slowly dragging India back into the stream of historical evolution. But the intellectual leaders of Congress felt differently, exposed as they had been for generations to Western culture and its vivid consciousness of history. Nationalism could not be defended intellectually without being based on some sort of historical perspective. Jawaharlal Nehru, his disciple and heir, was a fervent student of history. A true representative of the age of Asian nationalism, he attempted to work out the problems of India by traveling on a road which paralleled Gandhi's but which was set on a more intellectual and Westernized level, where logic and reason were presumed to do away with religious myths and superstitions, where a scientific conception of existence was presumed to do away with castes and creeds, to replace them with democratic equality and Indian citizenship.

Gandhi was as deeply religious as Nehru professed to be agnostic, but just as the profoundly religious Vivekānanda remained the lifelong friend of Pandit Vidyasagar, who had uncompromisingly rejected God and religion, so did Gandhi see in Nehru a man who, for all his professions of agnosticism, was deeply religious—in the sense of being unselfishly devoted to what he conceived to be his *dharma*, his "duty," which is in Sanskrit the expression also used for "religion": "While Jawaharlal always says he does not believe in God, he is nearer to God than many who profess to be His worshippers," remarked Gandhi.[1] In India, he is religious who actually *lives* his religious duty, not he who merely thinks or talks about it. Gandhi and Nehru were complementary collaborators who, yet, could never agree on fundamentals. Gandhi was the spokesman for

the mute, illiterate masses—and for a return to the past—while Nehru stood for the more sophisticated intellectuals and educated middle classes—and for a bold leap into the future. Gandhi's "Tolstoyanism" was no more approved by Nehru than the *narodnik* idealism of the Russian peasant was by Lenin. His deep feelings as an intellectual Brāhmin come to light when he exclaims that he has a horror of the "simple peasant life."

These two men who were, a generation later, a replica of the team of Rāmakrishna-Vivekānanda, were going to lead India out of the world of Western colonialism into a new world full of dangers and uncertainties for which an ahistorical outlook is badly prepared. Historical consciousness and political wisdom are inseparable, and nowhere is this more obvious than in Indian history, where the lack of one entailed inevitably the absence of the other. Untouched by Western culture, the Indian masses attempted, under Gandhi's leadership, to turn the clock back and cancel time; they wanted to live in a timeless present without memory of the past or anticipation of the future, at the mercy of reflexes conditioned by their atavism and their mechanical caste-upbringing. Had they had their way, their inveterate distrust of politics and the state—this automatic reflex that colored the Indian philosophy of politics from time immemorial —would have ended, not merely in the dissolution of British power, but in the dissolution of the Indian state as well, and eventually in chaos. But the way was barred by the Western-trained elites and middle classes led by Nehru, whose ideal was an all-India state on the Western pattern, with an Indian nationalism based on some kind of historical perspective.

In the two greatest Eastern revolutions of the twentieth century (Russian and Chinese), the old imperial regimes were overthrown by massive revolts of hundreds of millions of peasants. But those revolts were *captured* by the small but determined Communist parties led by intellectual elites whose ideals were precisely the opposite of the vague aims of the rural masses; these masses were then enslaved for the purpose of building "Pharaonic" states whose main goal was rapid industrialization at all costs. The Communists knew how to enslave the peasants, the "pack-horse of civilization," as Trotsky called them. But the Indian struggle for independence was conducted on different lines: it was an alliance, a collaboration in which, up to Independence in 1947, the masses under Gandhi's leadership dictated the pace and technique of the struggle for free-

dom; and the educated, more or less Westernized middle classes under Nehru's direction merely followed the blind instincts of the masses.

The reason for this inverted form of relationship between Indian elites and masses springs from the fact that the Indian elites had not been able to come to grips with the problem of history, did not know how to reconcile it with the fundamentally ahistorical outlook of their traditional culture. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who has grappled with the problem at greater length than any other modern Indian philosopher, has not been able to formulate a valid synthesis. He is quite willing to concede that "human history is not a series of secular happenings without any shape or pattern; it is a meaningful process, a significant development."[2] What the process is, Radhakrishnan informs us later on: "The historical process is not a mere external chain of events, but offers a succession of spiritual opportunities. Man has to attain mastery over it and reveal the higher world operating in it. . . ."[3] History is something organic, a phase of man's terrestrial destiny as essential for him as memory is for personal identity. It is the triumph of memory over the spirit of corruption."[4] There is, of course, not a shred of evidence that this attitude was ever taken in Hindu scriptures or the various Hindu philosophies. This is, through and through, a Western outlook, not an Indian one. And, being the self-acknowledged spokesman for the traditional Hindu world-outlook, Radhakrishnan has to backtrack somewhat. Afraid of granting too much spiritual meaning to the time process, he explains that "God and not the world of history is the true environment of our souls."[5] He then asks: "What is the relation of absolute Being to historical Becoming, of eternity to Time?"[6] And having analyzed the various answers, he concludes that "the eternal does not take part in the temporal process as though it were one with it. We see the eternal through the temporal, not face to face, but under a veil. Becoming is an imperfect representation of Being. . . . Hindu thought is emphatic in asserting that the changes of the world do not affect the integrity of perfection of the absolute."[7]

This relative failure of India's greatest contemporary philosopher to integrate history within his philosophic structure is only the intellectualization of a profound instinct. One of the most articulate modern Indians tells us quite clearly that "there was nothing which came as a greater surprise to me, a student of history, than the disparage-

ment of history by educated Indians of my class. In our schools and colleges history was supposed to be the last resort of the dullard endowed with a good rote-memory."[8] And he concludes: "All this denigration of history was the natural expression of the resentment of the Hindu at being forced to learn history against his traditional disposition to ignore it."[9]

Try as they may, the deepest thinkers of contemporary India cannot really accept history as a spiritual process. The great men of action, on the other hand, need history and study it, especially if they are detached from religious values. Nehru had to become interested in history, otherwise his nationalism would have been groundless, since he could not root it, as Gandhi did, in a *religion* of eternity. But Nehru's interest in the past was not so much motivated by a desire to extract a dynamic philosophy from it as to project the past into the present in order to understand it: "I came late to history," he once wrote, "I made voyages of discovery into the past, ever seeking a clue in it, if any such existed, to the understanding of the present. The domination of the present never left me . . . past history merged into contemporary history."[10] Of long perspective into the future, there is none. The lifelong struggle against the British blunted Nehru's, and most other thoughtful Indians', perspective into the future. As the great obstacle—British imperialism in India—against which all the arrows of Indian nationalism had been shot, dissolved gradually, Indian nationalists came face to face with all the residual problems left over from a past which they had refused to understand objectively. The overwhelming problems of contemporary India were such that every ounce of energy had to be spent catering to the urgent needs of the present, and coping with one emergency after another. The future would have to take care of itself.

Consciousness of history was no luxury for India, since the complexities of her contemporary problems could only be understood in connection with history. They were all historical growths, left over from a dim past: the presence of ninety million Muslims was a leftover from the Afghan and Moghul era, the Sikhs from the syncretic attempts made in that era, the untouchables from the disastrous ossification of the Hindu social structure, the linguistic problems from the lack of unifying principle in the Indian ethos, the increasing movements toward provincial autonomy from the same principle leading to cultural separatism, the complexities of the caste system

from the most antique racial conflict known to history, the anti-Brāhmin and pro-Dravidian movements of South India from the old, undigested Aryan influence from the north. And so on, endlessly.

It was to be expected that, in view of their contempt for history, the leaders of Congress would simply ignore these problems and pretend that they did not exist at all. There was no instinctive feeling for the necessary time lag between desire and fulfillment, between laying down policies and the time required to carry them out. Once formulated, a policy had to be carried out *right away*, regardless of consequences. Nothing is more striking than the contrast between this attitude that ignores the time element almost completely and the time-bound attitude of the Chinese Communists, who always displayed their profound understanding of historical elements and of the time required for the execution of any policy—for instance, preserving a semi-capitalistic structure in trade and industry as long as necessary to form new socialized institutions to take over. It irked even the more Western-influenced men like Nehru, who was all for stating objectives and laying down plans and who more than once complained about Gandhi's instinctive refusal "to look into the future, or lay down any long-distance program."[11]

It is not at all surprising, then, that having decided that the Muslim League did not exist as a spokesman for the Muslim masses, Congress proceeded to ignore it, purely and simply. Even Nehru, who should have known better, accepted this policy and adopted this attitude. Later, he was frank enough to assume part of the responsibility: "We failed in finding a solution for the communal problem agreeable to all parties concerned, and certainly we must share the blame as we have to shoulder the consequences for this failure."[12] But in the 1930's, this evident failure had not yet become manifest. The Muslim League was still relatively weak; and Congress attempted to apply to the Muslims the policy of "divide and rule" which it reproached the British for using against Indian nationalism. Congress encouraged and allied itself with all the weak or backward Muslim groups and associations who struggled against both the British and the Muslim League: the reactionary Jamiat-ul-'Ulamā; the Punjabi organization known as the Ahrar, representing mostly lower-middle-class Muslims; the poor and backward weavers known as Momins; or splinter organizations of Shia Muslims who set themselves up against the orthodox Sunnis. The peak of this Muslim agitation directed against the Muslim League was reached at the Azad

Muslim Conference in 1940 at Delhi; thereafter, the Muslim League made steady progress and at the end of World War II came to represent the bulk of Indian Muslims. The policy of "divide and rule" backfired at Congress as it did at the British themselves.

Historical realities were denied in many other instances, especially in connection with the latent separatist tendencies in the various provinces with their vernacular languages and autonomous cultures. But some historical realities were truly recognized, and the most important of all, thanks to Gandhi: that true revolutionary power in India belonged neither to the Western-oriented middle classes nor the urban or industrial proletariat, but to the overwhelming masses of India's peasants. And it was Nehru's greatness that he followed in the footsteps of the Mahatma and plunged directly into the realities of rural poverty and misery for which his aristocratic upbringing and British education had not prepared him. He traveled across the land, talked to millions of *kisans* (farmers) over the years, concentrated on the areas where the problem of the landlordism of money-grabbing *zamindārs* and *talukdars* (especially in the United Provinces, Bengal Bihār and Orissa) was becoming acute. Thousands of Congress members who sprung from a middle class and urban background were compelled to visit thousands of humble villages, helped farmers to reorganize their old *panchāyats,* and attached them to the political destiny of Congress.[13] The great political success of Congress lay in this alliance between the rural masses and the urban middle classes, symbolized by the remarkable team Gandhi-Nehru. The urban and industrial proletariat was bypassed. Even Nehru did not feel quite at home with the proletariat; and the violently leftist leadership of the industrial workers distrusted the bourgeois leadership of Congress.

Nothing is more illuminating in this respect than a study of the fate of Indian Communism. Marxism made very little progress between the two World Wars, and Nehru pointed out the social cause with perspicacity: "Communists in India have associated with the industrial workers of the big towns. They have little knowledge of, or contact with, the rural areas. The industrial workers, important as they are, and likely to be more so in the future, must take second place before the peasants, for the problem of today in India is the problem of the peasantry. Congress workers, on the other hand, have spread all over these rural areas, and, in the ordinary course, the Congress must develop into a vast peasant organization."[14]

Compared with its powerful Chinese counterpart, the Indian Communist movement floundered hopelessly. While it is certain that the British kept a tight grip on the situation from a purely political standpoint, it is becoming clear that the failure of Indian Communism had more fundamental reasons. As in China, Marx and Marxism were almost totally ignored until the Russian Revolution put it, so to speak, on the map of Asia. The October Revolution struck some members of India's intelligentsia as being the outstanding political phenomenon of their age. Often disdaining to plunge into the more intricate and abstract Hegelian sources of Marxist philosophy, many Indians followed in Nehru's footsteps and derived their vague historical perspective from a Marxism-Leninism which had proved its "success" in the world of practical politics, rather than its intrinsic philosophic greatness; Nehru himself claims that "A study of Marx and Lenin produced a powerful effect on my mind and helped me to see history and current affairs in a new light. The long chain of history and of social development appeared to have some meaning, some sequence, and the future lost some of its obscurity."[15] Nehru then goes on to express a mixture of admiration for the "practical achievements of the Soviet Union" and dislike for its ruthless methods.

Like most of his compatriots who were aware of world politics, Nehru remained essentially a nationalist whose intellectual justification was based on a perspective of past history but who remained tied to the practical, evolutionary concept of Western Socialism rather than the revolutionary outlook of Eastern Marxism. What might have attracted him in Marxism was its powerful anti-capitalist message, which is bound to appeal to members of a civilization that always looked down upon money-making, that always despised the selfish accumulation of worldly possessions and had always wisely separated money power from prestige and consideration. The British had artificially created a new capitalist class of landowners (*zamindārs* and *taluqdars*) and had contributed to the development of private capitalism in the big cities, which had then imposed what Nehru called "the *bania* civilization of the capitalist West"[16]—the Baniā being the great trading caste of northern and western India.

But the powerful impact of the October Revolution in Russia was considerably enhanced over a decade later when the Great Depression of the early 1930's disrupted the economic fabric of the West, indirectly bolstering Marxist prophecies. It was a dramatic confirma-

tion of some Marxist ideas and appeared to be a cruel indictment of Western capitalism. Nehru himself then wrote: "The great world crisis and slump seemed to justify the Marxist analysis. While other systems and theories were groping about in the dark, Marxism alone explained it more or less satisfactorily and offered a real solution."[17] And he emphasized again: "Russia apart, the theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, howsoever unconscious, behind it."[18]

As the Indian intelligentsia moved away from the West and from the influence of Western culture in the process of its "Indianization," new gods had to be sought and new idols worshiped. The Great Depression was powerfully instrumental in orienting many Indian minds toward Marxism: "The younger men and women of the Congress who used to read Bryce on democracies and Morely and Keith and Mazzini, were now reading, when they could get them, books on socialism and communism and Russia."[19] But this intellectual curiosity never really went beyond the stage of flirtation. Nothing could be more basically alien to the Hindu mind than Dialectical Materialism, and there never arose a brilliant Indian, as so many brilliant Chinese arose, who could claim to be a devoted Marxist. Leadership was always lacking, as well as the indispensable rural base of farmers and peasants. And Nehru remarked that Communism in general was "hostile to, and bitterly critical of, the national movement."[20]

Until the end of World War II, Indian Communism as such had not really made a shred of progress. Marxism had failed to make a profound impact on the intelligentsia for basic reasons which are rooted in the psychology and philosophical dispositions of the Indians: dogmatism, to start with, has always repelled the Indians— whether Christian or Marxist-Leninist. Aware of the insubstantiality of all shapes and forms, of the relativity that attaches to all theories and doctrines and philosophic systems, they have an intuitive dislike for set-fast intellectual systems that pretend to explain all human problems in a rigid, mechanical fashion. Furthermore, Indians have never had enough feeling for the philosophy of history to absorb Marx's gross oversimplification and find it intellectually as well as emotionally satisfying. The history-conscious Chinese could embrace Marxism with religious fervor, but the ahistorical Indians

could not. The basic reason for the failure of Communism is that there was not, and never has been in India, the intellectual and emotional void which hollowed out China's soul after the collapse of its Neo-Confucian world outlook and its worldly civilization. Indians, or at least the best among them, are intensely religious, and, contrary to the belief commonly held in the West, their religiosity is by no means tied to its petrified and outdated caste structure and to Hindu orthodoxy. It is a feeling of such depth that, although it will respond to external challenges as it has so far responded to both Christianity and Western industrialism by attempting to adopt itself, it is in essence indestructible. Marxist dogmas are fundamentally powerless against such rocklike resistance.

In the early 1930's, while the Great Depression was sweeping through the world, while the Japanese invaded Manchuria and Hitler came to power in Germany, the British determined to reassert themselves in India. They cleverly played a double game: vigorous repression of the nationalist activities of Congress, on the one hand, and slow progress toward some form of limited self-rule, on the other. The great Civil Disobedience movement had been decided upon when Congress' demand for full dominion status at the end of 1929 had not been met by the British. A revolutionary atmosphere overlay India; strikes multiplied, industrial workers and farmers became extremely restive; terrorism had started again, riots broke out in countless places. It was in these circumstances that Nehru mounted the Congress *gadi* (throne) in 1929, that is, assumed the presidency of Congress, succeeding his father Motilal; it was the first time in the history of Congress that a son succeeded his father as president. Having stated plainly that he endorsed Gandhi's policy of non-violence (not so much on moral as on practical grounds of expediency), having stated the nature of India's three major problems (the princes, the minorities and the rural and urban masses' poverty), he moved the resolution of *Swaraj*, that is complete independence, on the night of December 31, 1929. The real struggle with the British was on.

From then on, although Gandhi's influence remained paramount in the background, Nehru took over political leadership of Congress and of Indian nationalism. His only rival, the Indian Trotsky to his Stalin, was a brilliant, erratic and mystically inclined Bengali, Subhas Bose, a man of volcanic temper whose roots dug far deeper into

Indian soil than Nehru's, but who was also less reliable and whose alliance with the Germans and the Japanese during World War II estranged him from the great majority of Congress leaders. Bose was a martial Kayastha (a Kṣatriya subcaste), a studious disciple of Vivekānanda and a devotee of the "primeval power" *sakti,* who made obeisance in public to its symbolic representation—the goddess Kālī. Whereas Bose expressed his antagonism toward Gandhi and his non-violence in outspoken and sometimes violent terms, Nehru always attempted to rationalize Gandhi's most mysterious utterances and acts. When in early 1930 Gandhi moved his miscellaneous Eleven Points, Nehru and his colleagues were puzzled by the number of minor and seemingly irrelevant points—prohibition of alcohol, abolition of the salt tax, and so on—whereas the issue of total independence was uppermost in their minds. But Nehru understood by instinct that Gandhi seized on a seemingly unimportant but concrete issue which had immediate meaning for the farmers, who could probably not be moved by the more abstract and remote political demands of the educated middle classes. Nehru and his followers provided the intellectual framework and organizational ability, as well as the aims; Gandhi provided an almost irresistible mass power by focusing its demands on less exalted but far more practical issues. And when Gandhi set out on foot on March 12th, he dramatized the salt-tax issue as Nehru never could. Aged 61, Gandhi covered almost 250 miles on foot and reached the seashore at Dandi on April 5th; standing on the beach, he picked up a lump of crude salt and symbolically broke the law.

As Nehru wrote later on, "It seemed as though a spring had been suddenly released."[21] A country-wide breaking of the salt law took place; a peaceful but massive upheaval of the Indian masses was followed by stern repression and jailing of tens of thousands of Congress leaders. Even the Indian women joined in the upheaval, the surest signal that British rule was being seriously threatened. And just as the Great Depression was getting under way, a massive economic boycott of British goods dealt a terrible blow to Britain's industry; by the autumn of 1930, imports of British cotton piece goods had declined by about 70 per cent. The world-wide slump in commodity prices was now reaching India and was hitting the Indian farmers; a tax strike was in order, and the energetic organizer of Congress, Vallabhbhai Patel, had started one in Gujarāt. There was no danger of social schism in that area because Gujarāt had

never had the doubtful benefit of the Permanent Settlement; in Gujarāt, it was the *raiyatwari* (or *ryotwari*) system that prevailed, that is, the peasant-owner of the land who dealt directly with the state. But in eastern India, in the United Provinces especially, it was the *zamindāri* or *taluqdari* system of landlordism. A no-tax campaign there could lead to grave social disturbances unless peasants and landlords collaborated.

At this juncture, the energy and political dedication of the urban middle classes began to flag. It was essential that the rural masses should be mobilized if a collapse of the whole movement was to be avoided. But it was just as essential that no social crisis (struggle between peasants and landlords) should take place that would only divide the nationalists and weaken the revolutionary movement. Congress decided to appeal to both landlords and peasants to support the no-tax campaign. Although few landlords joined it, there was no social crisis; and although embarrassing to the authorities, the no-tax campaign petered out. Urged on by the Indian Liberals (Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Jayakar), Gandhi accepted to meet the viceroy, Lord Irwin; faithful to his indirect method that always seemed to pay no attention to basic issues, Gandhi put forth a number of social claims that seemed wide of the political mark set by Congress. And when he finally came to an agreement with Lord Irwin, Congress leaders were appalled at the concessions he had made. Nehru wept and told him: "What frightens me is your way of springing surprises upon us." He then added: "Although I have known you for fourteen years, there is something unknown about you which I cannot understand. It fills me with apprehension." To which Gandhi replied: "Yes, I admit the presence of this unknown element and I confess that I myself cannot answer for it nor foretell where it might lead to."[22] The whole tenor of the relationship between Gandhi (the rural masses) and Nehru (the urban middle class) was contained in this exchange of remarks. And also, once more, the essentially ahistorical nature of Gandhi's spasmodic, unplanned activity that always took place in a discontinuous series of unrelated *presents*.

Thanks to the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, civil disobedience was called off all over India. But if Congress bitterly resented the concessions made by Gandhi, the majority of the British civil servants resented it even more bitterly as an intolerable humiliation. Neither side had taken true stock of the situation; another showdown was necessary. This could not come before one side or the other had

breached the agreement. Following the pact, it was inevitable that Gandhi should attend the second Round Table Conference in London, in 1931, as sole representative of Congress (the Liberals having had a field day in the first one, the preceding year). Gandhi did not fare well and was largely responsible for the growing rift between Hindus and Muslims. Partly because they were compelled by circumstances to do so, partly because it was an extension of their "divide and rule" policy, the British had invited the representatives of every conceivable group and minority in India. All, except the Sikhs, demanded separate electorates. Outflanked on the right by the extremists of the Hindu Mahasabha and other similar organizations (Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Dr. Jayakar and B. S. Moonjee), whom he should have put down; faced on the left by an unbreakable coalition of minorities (Muslims, Sikhs, untouchables, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Catholics), Gandhi failed to extricate himself from his difficulties. He accepted their communal demands in exchange for their support of his demand for political independence; distrustful, they demanded outright grant of their communal claims before they considered the question of independence. Failure was inevitable, and the talks broke down.

Nothing was more galling, to Gandhi and Congress, than the rise of the untouchables as a separate entity *outside* the Hindu framework. And the sight of bickering between Indians in London had considerably lowered India's prestige in the West. At home, the economic situation was not improving; the peasants were in no position or mood to pay their taxes; the British officials wanted a showdown to "put Congress in its place"; and communal disturbances between Muslims and Hindus were on the increase. The showdown came when the United Provinces Government broke off negotiations with Congress. From then on, the inevitable sequence of arrests, disorders and repression followed its usual course. Nehru, Gandhi and thousands of Congress workers were arrested, while tax strikes, boycott of foreign goods and riots began to paralyze the British administration. *Lathi* charges broke up noisy demonstrations in scores of cities, but civil disobedience was only sporadic. Congress became impotent and lost the initiative to the government. The third Round Table Conference took place in London in 1932, and the British made a supreme bid to split once and for all the vast social body of India.

In August, 1932, the British Government announced the provi-

sional scheme known as the Communal Award for the representation of minorities. The untouchables (officially, the Depressed or Scheduled Classes) were granted separate electorates and were also free to contest seats in the general constituencies. This time, Gandhi saw the threat and faced it boldly. Announcing his decision to "fast unto death," he sent an electric shock coursing through the whole of India. As usual, Nehru was dismayed at Gandhi's tactics and at his focusing all his efforts on what was seemingly a side issue; and as usual, he thought it over, overcame his own feelings and fell in line. Gandhi's fast soon came to an end when Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, leader of the untouchables, came to an agreement with him; but inevitably, Gandhi's renewed interest in the welfare of the *harijans* ("Children of God" in Gandhi's own terminology) aroused the anger of the orthodox Hindus and extremist organizations such as the Mahasabha. There was no way of pleasing everyone.

While the civil disobedience movement went on fitfully, Congress leaders were in jail and Gandhi was paying more and more attention to the "sin of untouchability" at the expense of his purely political activity. The vigorous repression of the British had almost paralyzed Congress; the cautious moves made by the British toward some form of self-government in India seduced the Indian Liberals and moderates. The three Round Table conferences had resulted in a White Paper, followed by the creation of a Joint Select Committee which worked for a year and a half on a new constitution for India. The final result was the India Act of 1935, put into effect in the provinces in April, 1937. This act really tackled two problems all at once: self-rule and autonomy for the provinces, and creation of an all-India federation including the princely states. The first part of the new constitution was applied until 1939; the second never came into being because of the refusal of the princes to give up their autonomy.

The showdown had come to an end. The British, on the whole, had won the contest and were moving toward Indian self-government at their own evolutionary pace, not Congress' revolutionary one. Gandhi called off civil resistance in 1934 and instructed Congress members to devote themselves to "nation-building" activities—communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims, struggle against untouchability, spreading hand spinning. More perceptive than Nehru and many of his followers, Gandhi had drawn the true moral from the last years' struggle: India as a nation was not yet ready to cope with the problems of self-rule; further transformations of

India's inner being and structure were necessary. He admitted: "I was blind. Blindness in a leader is unpardonable. I saw at once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of civil resistance in action."[23] His philosophy had always been to concentrate on the means and let the end take care of itself. Nehru, far more Westernized, wanted clear thought and precise definition of the end; the means would take care of themselves. Gandhi concentrated on eternal values (symbolized every instant in the *means*), Nehru on timely values; one was religious, the other history-conscious. They could and did work together; but there never could be, and never was, any real meeting of the minds. This, again, was in the true Indian tradition of complete respect for every human being's particular and differing personality. And Nehru then learned the hardest lesson of all, one which has been consistently taught by Indian culture and emphasized by her more than by any other culture: that is, the essential *loneliness* of the true individual who is not a mere robot. He reminisced later: "Of the many hard lessons that I had learnt, the hardest and the most painful now faced me: that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on anyone. One must journey through life alone; to rely on others is to invite heartbreak."[24] The roots of his latter-day Caesarian attitude lay in this psychological discovery.

In many ways, the British had won their battle, but at the eventual cost of India's unity. They were beginning to undo with their own hands the great work of political, social and cultural unification undertaken many generations ago, and stimulated all the latent fissiparous trends in India. The Government of India Act of 1935 embodied the Communal Award, according to which nineteen religious and social groups divided the electorate, each of them with separate representation. Hindu-Muslim tension was growing by leaps and bounds; Hindu extremism was rearing its head, and the Mahasabha went to the length of congratulating the government for not lifing the ban on the Muslim Red Shirt movement (affiliated with Congress) in the Northwest Frontier Province.

Congress itself was more bitter, frustrated and divided than it had been since the remote pre-war days. A socialist group had arisen in its midst upon which Gandhi frowned and Nehru smiled. Congress had lost touch with the masses and its membership had dwindled. There was no choice left but to collaborate with Britain's limited scheme of provincial self-government while protesting that the whole

scheme was bad. The provincial elections were a triumph for Congress, weak as it was: absolute majorities in five provinces and control over three more through coalitions, leaving only the Punjab, Sind and Bengal, where Muslims were in a majority. Most striking of all, Congress crushed the anti-Brāhmin Justice Party which had been in power since 1922 in Madras. But those were also decisive days for Hindu-Muslim relations. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who had gradually emerged as the strongest and most skillful Muslim leader, sincerely hoped that his Muslim League could co-operate with Congress in working the federal constitution, in which he had no more faith than Congress did. He believed simultaneously in the separation of the Hindu and Muslim communities and then in full co-operation between them on a basis of equality. He was disappointed. Congress refused to collaborate with the Muslim League (which had made a poor showing at the elections) and, wherever it could, determined to run the provinces alone. From then on, the gap between the two communities widened steadily and the League skillfully exploited all Muslim grievances against Hindus and Sikhs. The threat of a Congress Raj was quite enough to frighten most Muslims into joining the League.

Here again, Congress sinned by being too Westernized. Had it been true to the spirit of Indian culture, it would have respected the separate personality of the Islamic community and co-operated with it, instead of either denying its existence altogether or trying to destroy its individuality and put the clock back to pre-Islamic days. Nehru insisted that "There are only two parties in the country: the Congress and the British." Jinnah now replied with increasing assertiveness that the Muslims were a third factor and expostulated in October, 1937, that "the majority community have clearly shown their hand that Hindustan is for the Hindus."[25] Gandhi protested this "declaration of war," but nothing tangible was done by Congress to remedy the situation. And Jinnah cleverly exploited the struggle between Congress and the British by insinuating himself as a third factor and building the Muslim League into a mass organization on the Congress model. The intellectual leaders of the national movement might protest that this was highly unreasonable, but they themselves, under Gandhi, had led and inspired a mass movement of revolutionary proportions; they should have been the first to know that once a mass movement is generated and dormant emotions are awakened and aroused, reason and logic take their leave.

Thanks to the power of his personality, Gandhi had been able to impose a measure of discipline on his Hindu followers, and even affect some Muslims; but the bulk of the Muslims were bound to escape his influence when communal issues came to the fore. The result was now plain: the Muslim League was doing for the Muslim masses, twenty years later, what Congress had done for the Hindu masses at the end of World War I. And between two blind, highly emotional mass movements operating at cross-purposes, there could be no true understanding.

Congress ministries began functioning toward the end of 1937 in the provinces and acquired valuable training in the technique of administrative work and provincial self-government. But the spirit of the federal scheme was violated in the sense that all Congress ministries took their instructions from the All-India Congress Working Committee; provincial autonomy was systematically disregarded; joined with the refusal of Congress to accept co-operation with other parties in those provinces where it had a majority, it did more to alarm and alienate the Muslims than all the bitter words that had been exchanged before. Congress itself, with its own hands, created its inevitable counterpart: Pakistan, the expression of the Muslims' separate nationhood. Jinnah had sincerely tried to co-operate with Congress for years and was driven almost in spite of himself to the idea of Pakistan, one which very few Muslims took seriously in the early 1930's. A few years later, he had become an uncompromising partisan of Pakistan and claimed: "Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test as a nation. . . . By all the canons of international law, we are a nation."[28]

The growing stalemate between the two parties was broken by the dramatic advent of World War II. Peeved because the British authorities in India had automatically declared India at war alongside Britain and the self-governing dominions without consulting any Indian leader, and in spite of the sympathy of the overwhelming majority of Congressmen for the cause of Britain and democracy, Congress withdrew its eight provincial ministries in November, 1939, and ineptly let the field open to its opponents. Jinnah pounced on his providential opportunity and called upon the Muslim League and all opponents of Congress to celebrate the resignation of Congress ministries as a Day of Deliverance. His goal of Pakistan had not yet been officially proclaimed; but the goal was now in sight, at least as the most important item on his forthcoming program.

Gandhi's ultimate efforts in January, 1940, to swing Jinnah around to co-operation "in building up the Indian nation" failed completely, and a triumphant Jinnah replied: "You start with the theory of an Indian nation that does not exist."[27]

World War II was now in full swing.

Congress had cast itself into a political wilderness when its eight provincial ministries resigned. It was a tactical error of monumental magnitude: only Jinnah and the Muslim League could benefit from such political sulking. Congress as a whole was favorable to Britain's war aims, but refused to assist the British Raj on any except its own terms. And reluctantly Congress leaders turned once more to Gandhi, who had watched their efforts to come to terms with Britain with great misgivings. The Mahatma resumed his leadership: whatever happened, Congress must struggle non-violently—be it against the British or, possibly, the invading Japanese. The failure of the British mission headed by Sir Stafford Cripps in the spring of 1942 further hardened the position of Congress. The swift collapse of Burma had not enhanced British prestige in Indian eyes, and it was obvious that it was only the serious disasters suffered by the British in Southeast Asia that had prompted the belated concessions offered by the Cripps Mission.

Now, under Gandhi's unquestioned leadership, Congress was to make its boldest move. In July, 1942, the Congress Working Committee passed the famous "Quit India" resolution, demanding an immediate abdication of British power in India in order to stave off what was believed to be an impending Japanese invasion. Gandhi had scarcely had time enough to decide on a mass *Satyagraha* campaign in August when the British decapitated at one stroke the entire leadership and a great deal of the rank and file of the nationalists by arresting over sixty thousand members of the Congress Party. The activities of the great organization were now virtually paralyzed for three fateful years.

The British won a Pyrrhic victory, and many of them knew it. Exhausted by the second great civil war of Europe, their prestige considerably damaged by the crushing defeats suffered at the hands of the Japanese, they could no longer hope to retain their political stranglehold over India. In a vain effort to cling to shreds of their imperial power, they had been steadily driven to destroy with their own hands the great historical work they had accomplished in more

glorious days: the unification of the Indian subcontinent. They had slyly encouraged the natural centrifugal forces that always threaten to tear India apart and did nothing to counteract the rapid development of a separate Muslim nationhood. Concentrating mostly on winning the great war in progress, they sacrificed, in India as elsewhere, many of the assets which the West had accumulated for many generations in the Orient. They bolstered, directly or indirectly, all the anti-Congress elements (including the Communists) who were willing to help in the war effort, regardless of future consequences. And in India, at the time, the real beneficiary of this policy was neither the British nor Congress: it was Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League.

But even though the British could never again emerge victorious from this conflict in India, the fact was at the time that the Allies were now rolling back the German and Japanese tides, and were in the process of winning the war. To an extent, the British Raj was at least in a position to pick and choose its heirs. It did not have to intervene directly in the contest between Congress and the Muslim League; it simply had to let things take their natural course and keep the great bulk of Congress leaders and workers in jail for the duration of the war. Direct negotiations between Gandhi (who had been released on medical grounds) and Jinnah made this plain; Gandhi's desperate efforts on behalf of a united India now met an adamant rejection from the Muslim League.

In June, 1945, the British Government finally decided upon a major effort to break the deadlock. The war was over in Europe and the time had come to seek a solution to the Indian puzzle. Lord Wavell, the viceroy, offered to reconstitute an all-Indian Executive Council (except for the viceroy himself and the Commander-in-Chief). Wavell's hesitations and endless bargaining with Congress and the Muslim League hardly delayed the process of disintegration of British power. Symbol of Britain's lassitude with the war and of its altered mood, the Labour Party was voted into office in the summer of 1945—and from then on, it was clear that the abdication of the British Raj would come as soon as practicable. Elections were held in India in January, 1946, for both the central and provincial legislatures; they were notable not so much for the expected triumph of Congress in Hindu areas as for the antagonistic triumph of the Muslim League, which captured three-quarters of the Muslim votes.

In February, 1946, the British Government decided to send a Cabinet Mission to India to study the coming transfer of political power to Indian hands. Endless rounds of talks took place, all of them focused on a belated effort to save the unity of India. A wide variety of schemes were put forth to preserve some sort of central government with such limited powers and functions as to avoid frightening the Muslims. At one point, the Cabinet Mission attempted to rule out Pakistan altogether and put forth its proposals for an all-India union; but the British were now unwilling to enforce any solution; they merely made recommendations. They now left it to the Indians themselves to frame their future, leaving the old British Raj free to withdraw as promptly and honorably as possible.

The dilatory behavior of the Viceroy and the Congress Party's failure to assess the true gravity of the situation prompted Jinnah, now known as the *Qaid-i-Azam* (Savior of the People) to step out of the legal, constitutional framework in which the Muslim League had operated hitherto. On August 16, 1946, he proclaimed the "Direct Action Day" and set in motion the waves of mass violence that were going to pit millions of Muslims against millions of Hindus and Sikhs. Claiming that "This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods," the *Qaid-i-Azam* assumed direct responsibility for the upsurge of Hindu-Muslim hatred and fear that swept from Lahore to Calcutta; the blood of thousands of victims ran along the gutters of Calcutta during "The Great Killing." But Jinnah was shrewd enough to realize that this alone would not make the dream of Pakistan come true, and that it might even wreck it. Nehru and the Congress had agreed to take part in the Interim Government; clever enough to avoid the mistake made by Congress in 1939, Jinnah finally agreed to join Nehru in the Interim Government in October. Rather than leave a dangerous vacuum, he would fill it and sabotage the working of the government from within. He then paralyzed the Constituent Assembly by forbidding the Muslim League members to take part in the proceedings. Obviously, there was no way out of the dilemma except by giving in to the Muslim League and its astute leader.

Many years before, when Congress started on the road of mass rebellion under Gandhi's leadership, the Indian Muslims *were not* a nation in the modern sense of the term. But a quarter of a century later they were on the way to *becoming* one. Had Congress leaders been wiser, they need not have become one.

In February, 1947, Britain's Labour Government took the bold decision of proclaiming June, 1948, as the time of transfer of power from British to Indian hands—whether agreement between the contending parties was reached or not. The impact of this declaration was tremendous and a new sense of urgency pervaded the negotiations between Congress and the Muslim League. Nehru and the top Congress leaders suspected that there was an unspoken agreement between some senior British officials and the Muslim League. Whether the accusation was correct or not is an academic matter for future historians to debate. The fact remains that there was no longer a possibility of preserving a united India and that the only course left open was negotiations on the precise demarcation of the boundaries between India and the future state of Pakistan.

While the Constituent Assembly (minus its Muslim League members) went ahead with the task of framing a constitution for India, and while a change of viceroys substituted Mountbatten for Wavell, Hindu-Muslim riots flared up all over India, but more especially in the Punjab and in Bengal. Gandhi toured some of the worst-affected areas and attempted to stop the outbreaks. The British administration, conscious of the fact that it would soon have to abdicate and had little moral power left, interfered as little as possible and let the riots develop more or less unchecked. The worsening situation finally convinced the Congress leaders to open direct negotiations with the Muslim League. A last effort of Gandhi's to offer full power to Jinnah with the aim of saving India's unity had not the slightest chance of being acceptable to either of the parties. Partition could no longer be avoided; Nehru and Patel saw this clearly in the spring of 1947; and to delay further the negotiations would only result in utter chaos. Gandhi, an obstinate, adamant opponent of partition, had by now lost almost all influence on the course of events.

Several months of haggling still lay ahead; but by now Britain's Labour Government was determined to put an end to the whole thing as quickly as possible, more quickly even than its declaration of February had anticipated. Speed was of the essence. And when agreement was in sight, August 15, 1947, was chosen as Independence Day. Everything was rushed in bewildering confusion, chaos spreading in the Punjab and Bengal torn by awful riots. Little was done on the Pakistani side to control them; most of the credit for eventually stemming the tide of gory madness that was sweeping through northern India went to Nehru, who spoke with the voice of

reason and acted with decisive courage—although he could not, and did not disclaim some share of responsibility in its origins. Addressing the diplomatic corps on September 12, in the middle of the riots, he said: "The history of India has been one of assimilation and synthesis of the various elements that have come in. . . . It is perhaps because we tried to go against this trend of the country's history that we are faced with this."[28]

For a time, before and after Partition, the fear was widespread that the two new nations would be stillborn, destroyed by tidal waves of mass murders and collective hysteria. The bloodthirsty goddess Kālī was at large, finding thousands of temporary incarnations to carry out her criminal designs. But gradually the awful tide receded, calm began to prevail in many areas which had been devastated repeatedly by arson and loot. There was peace at last, but only too often it was the peace of the graveyard—smoking ruins and hundreds of thousands of charred corpses littered whole regions of the Punjab and Bengal. And when Pakistanis and Indians emerged from this nightmare, it was to find themselves free at last, masters of their own destinies.

August 15th had come and gone swiftly, and two new nations arose from bloody chaos to find that they were indeed two different nations. Over twelve million refugees were in the process of being exchanged, Hindus and Sikhs fleeing from Pakistan, Muslims from India: Pakistan was becoming more Muslim, and India more Hindu in the process—even though forty million Muslims were left in India. If Jinnah's case before Partition had been weak in view of the geographical distribution of the populations and the scattered locations of many Muslims, it was immensely strengthened now by this exchange of populations carried out at the cost of tremendous loss of lives and great suffering. As for India, Congress was now indisputably in full control: the Congress Raj replaced the British Raj.

An immense legacy of bitterness marred the relations between the two new states almost immediately. The Muslim League always seemed to anticipate with pleasure a collapse of India without realizing that Pakistan would inevitably follow India down to chaos. Jinnah even encouraged the princes (most of whose territories were located in India rather than Pakistan) to proclaim their independence in order to Balkanize India. He followed this up by sending droves of rampaging Pathan tribesmen into Kashmir upon the acces-

sion of the state to India, and almost sent regular Pakistani troops to bolster them. It was only the quick and decisive action of the British Supreme Commander in charge of the partition of the Indian army that staved off the disaster of a general war between the two countries. Pakistan and India were now free—but not yet free enough to hack each other to pieces: they could not yet dispense with the considerable number of British officers serving in their new-born armies.

By the end of 1947, except for a few loose ends (Kashmir and Hyderabad states), the Indian subcontinent was neatly subdivided into two new states. And two more portions of the old Anglo-Indian Empire which had been previously detached (Ceylon and Burma) were well on their way to independence themselves. For the first time in many centuries, the whole area was independent and self-ruled. A new epoch was dawning.

Nehru Imperator

IN AN article which appeared in the 1930's under the pseudonym "Chanakya" (Chānakya was the patronymic name of Kauṭilya of *Arthasāstra* fame), Jawaharlal Nehru made a remarkably frank analysis of his own personality and especially of his innate autocratic temper. And then, peering into the future, he added: "In normal times he would just be an efficient and successful executive, but in this revolutionary epoch Caesarism is always at the door, and is it not possible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar? Therein lies the danger for Jawaharlal and India."[1]

This was prophetic insight, and all the more remarkable in that it was written by Nehru about himself. When he became Prime Minister of an independent India, Nehru no longer fancied himself as the autocratic dictator he seemed to have anticipated in earlier days. But his stature was definitely Caesarian, in the true sense of the word: he did not seize supreme power but was pushed into it by the worshiping crowds. Nominally a republic since 1950, India became in fact a monarchy whose ruler was, if he chose to be, a lifetime Caesar. He was almost *personally* the successor of the British Raj and had already been invested with a regal dignity by the supreme moral authority of the land: "He is our king," had stated Gandhi in 1947. Of course, Gandhi, the super-regal Father of the Nation, saw to it that this would not be a blank check and had added: "But we should not be impressed by everything the King does or does not do. If he has devised something good for us we should praise him. If he has not, then we shall say so."[2] The Mahatma remained the self-appointed guardian of the moral law with a super-regal mission of control, even though his political authority had considerably declined by then.

Gandhi was murdered early in 1948, only a few months after In-

dependence. Nehru was alone now, quite alone on his virtual throne. He was impelled by a sense of freezing isolation at the summit (and by Mountbatten's personal intervention) to put an end to his feud with Vallabhbhai Patel and make his peace with the capable and energetic head of the Congress organization. Together, they worked out the urgent problems of the time (the integration of the princely states, the problems of Kashmir and Hyderabad, the resettlement of millions of refugees) and mapped out the road leading into the future. But Patel was not destined to survive Gandhi's death by more than three years (he died in December, 1950) and Nehru soon found himself more isolated than ever. For better or for worse, this lonely man was to become the living symbol of an independent India attempting to adjust to the modern world.

Nehru's regime was going to have all the benefits of Caesarian rulership, but also all its weaknesses. His popularity among the Indian masses, great before Independence, now became unchallengeable. Popularity in India always has religious undertones, and even a self-acknowledged agnostic such as Nehru had to accept these religious undertones. Mass gatherings of Indians on the occasion of one of Nehru's numerous public appearances began to look like one of the great religious *kumbha-melās* where Hindu devotees congregate by the hundreds of thousands. It did not matter if Nehru impatiently pushed aside, out of his way, some Brāhmin priest who attempted to bless him and smear ashes on his forehead—a reminder of "outdated superstitions" which Nehru hated. It could not diminish the psychological need of Indian crowds for the grace-bestowing *Darshan,* the physical presence of a venerated leader as if a substantial fluid actually flowed from the godlike figure into their own veins. This psychological disposition has had a tremendous impact on Indian politics and raised Nehru onto a pedestal from which he could not descend, even if he wanted to.

Years of unchallenged power began to affect Nehru's character and personality. For all his remarkable qualities, he unconsciously became something of a noble tyrant—impulsive in his statements and decisions, often peevish, impatient with his wisest critics, far too forgiving where some corrupt members of his immediate entourage were concerned. He became the fount of all major decisions, the policy-making brain, the repository of ultimate responsibility in India. Prodding and coercing, brushing aside all objections, Nehru

dragged India willy-nilly along the path of Socialism at home and neutralism abroad.

It eventually dawned on Nehru that time must have a stop for him as for all men and that he had only a few years left. He became a man in a hurry—in a hurry to push through his policies and programs because there was so little time left. Gandhi was never in a hurry, mostly because he had chosen a worthy successor whom he trusted and who would carry on his work. But Jawaharlal Nehru refused to choose his own successor, partly because a resurgence of the old Hindu atavism in him made him instinctively indifferent to the post-Nehrunian fate of India and the world: what is to happen after his death is none of his business. He refused to consider the problem of his succession. Uninterested in extending his influence and policy beyond his death, he dealt essentially with the present and did not concern himself overmuch with the remote future. Questioned about his views on the future of India, he once exclaimed: "Why should I worry myself? The problems of the day are enough for me and I do not care what happens to me or my reputation once I am dead. When I am dead, what does it matter to me?"[3] In a way, the historical resemblance between Nehru and old Emperor Asoka was far too close for comfort—would it not be likely that India would fall apart after Nehru's demise as it had two thousand years before after Asoka's?

The crux of the drama lies in the fact that, whereas Gandhi was a superb judge of human character, Nehru was not. While Gandhi surrounded himself with a galaxy of brilliantly capable men, Nehru surrounded himself largely with yes-men. Gandhi was authoritarian but listened to advice and accepted contradiction and criticism with great patience. Nehru was impatient of criticism and became mentally inflexible. It was this intellectual inflexibility and a certain lack of interest in human individuals that was responsible for the dearth of new talent around him and made the prospect of his eventual disappearance from the political scene so ominous: he loved mankind, but as crowds and masses rather than particularized as specific individuals.

When Independence came to India, Gandhi had wisely suggested that Congress withdraw from politics and concentrate on social work: he wanted it to become a *lok sevak sangh*, a "people's welfare

organization." He foresaw that those thousands of Congress leaders
who had suffered and fought for India's independence would be
thirsting for the rich plums of office which they thought were rightly
theirs, forgetting the *Bhagavad Gītā's* sound counsel: "Toil day and
night but sacrifice beforehand the fruit of thy work." He suggested
that all those who chose to enter politics should do so on their own,
without capitalizing on the immense prestige of Congress. Nehru
did not take Gandhi's advice. He led the Congress Party to a smash-
ing victory at the polls in India's first general elections in 1952. And
what Gandhi foresaw and feared came to pass. Like the Kuomintang
in China, Congress began to feel the disintegrating influence of abso-
lute power; spoils were divided, jobs and functions were allotted on
the basis of reward for revolutionary activities under British rule
rather than on merit or competence. Corruption and nepotism be-
gan to corrode the organization. Nehru's Congressmen monopolized
power both at the center and in the states, and they began to sink
into a slothful enjoyment of their newly-acquired powers and privi-
leges.

Inevitable consequences followed. The normal working of a
healthy parliamentary system within the two-party framework was
frustrated because no true parliamentary opposition came into be-
ing. Ridiculing those on the right who had the temerity to uphold
"outdated" conservative theories, virtually squeezing out of existence
on the left the Praja Socialist Party (P.S.P.) and allied groups by
taking over its Socialist program (in words, if not in deeds), Nehru
ruled unchallenged through Congress. But Nehru was a poor organ-
izer and exercised no effective control over the workings of either
the party machinery (brilliantly built up in British days by Patel)
or the administration. And so, while Nehru tugged ceaselessly to the
left, the leadership of Congress slanted to the right the actual imple-
mentation of the policy. The divorce between policy-making and
implementation was further widened by the typical Indian's uncon-
scious feeling that words are often as good as deeds. An element of
unreality began to creep into Indian political life, resulting in a
semi-paralysis of all constructive efforts: social progress, land reform,
education, economic development, everything was started but noth-
ing was pushed through. Implementation was slow and fitful, and
problems kept piling up.

The absence of a true and honest conservative opposition on the
right had a telling effect on India's post-Independence political de-

velopment. The disappearance of iron-willed Vallabhbhai Patel, leader of the right-wing element within Congress, deprived it of courageous leadership. India's business community withdrew from active politics but came back behind the scenes in order to protect its private interests and acted as it always does in similar circumstances: through wire-pulling, intrigue and corruption. Shortly after, the premature and mysterious death of the extremely able young Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, founder of the Jana Sangh Party, deprived the more traditional and religious-minded right-wing element outside Congress of worthy leadership. Chakravarti Rajagopolachari, the great old man of Madras and the most intelligent, farsighted Indian statesman of modern times, was out of favor with Nehru even though his conservative mind was still as sharp as a razor blade.

More telling still was the chaotic state in which the Socialist opposition floundered. A bad handling of their electoral campaign gave to the Socialists a representation in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) which was much inferior to their real strength at the polls, while the exact reverse was true of the Communists. Their well-meaning leaders were ineffective and worked at cross-purposes. Lack of a clear program and of party discipline combined with the usurpation of the "Socialist" label by Congress deprived the Praja Socialists of any effective influence. When Nehru's attention was drawn to the danger presented by this virtual destruction of true parliamentary opposition, he impatiently remarked that he could not be expected to create himself his own opposition—the unconscious Caesar truly spoke his mind.

The inevitable results of this state of affairs were not difficult to predict. With the passing of time, Congress became in the 1950's a huge, unwieldy organization without a soul and without a real doctrine of action. It became largely a gathering of unprincipled self-seekers who paraded fashionable socialistic labels but who cared little for effective social reforms. Congress had no intellectual doctrine, no philosophy, no real ideology which could inspire India's younger generation and give it a sense of purpose. It failed to give a meaning to the life of the younger members of the intelligentsia who would be called upon to lead the India of the future. Although respectful of Gandhi's memory, it turned its back on most of his philosophy. Both Nehru and Congress inherited from their former British overlords a purely Anglo-Saxon pragmatism which is void of ideology and is basically not suited to an intellectually sophisticated people

who have always been dedicated to some ideology or other. Congress'
standard of ethics was consequently poor and its discipline slack. Its
only remaining element of strength was the personality of Nehru—
the Caesarian figure who arises and symbolizes the unity of a nation
in his *person,* as a substitute for a unifying body of abstract *ideas.*
What looms on the horizon when the Caesarian figure is removed
is some form of disorder or even chaos. In India, the danger is very
precise: it is some form of "Balkanization."

Nehru's India, shorn of East and West Pakistan, was still India
in the true sense of the word. It was Pakistan that had seceded, not
India. And the India that emerged from the ordeal of Partition was
a far more compact and truly Hindu state than would have been
possible without the blood-letting surgical operation. This made it
possible to devise a far more centralized realm than had previously
been contemplated; the autonomy of the various states was strongly
curtailed and the federal center assumed a great deal of the adminis-
trative burden that would, under other circumstances, have devolved
upon the individual states. But this only served to mask certain reali-
ties of the situation which were soon made dramatically manifest.

No one who is familiar with India, past and present, could forget
that this is not merely a nation but a continent as large as Europe,
a continent whose political and administrative unity was largely a
British creation, a Babel divided into more than a dozen major lin-
guistic groups and hundreds of minor ones, into innumerable reli-
gious sects and communities and castes following different laws and
different customs. Indeed, India is not merely a world; it is a uni-
verse. As such, its innate centrifugal forces are immense and have
to be constantly kept in check. Thanks partly to British policy in its
late stages, partly to the imprudent awakening of dormant forces by
the Indian leaders themselves, the ever-present fissiparous tendencies
that were bound to increase with the development of political con-
sciousness among the masses began to manifest themselves after the
First World War. They had been mainly *religious* before Partition,
and had opposed Muslims to Sikhs and Hindus. In independent
India, they became *linguistic.*

This danger seemed remote in British days when opposition to
British rule united most Indians, when Congress had thoughtlessly
promised to redraw the rather haphazard frontiers of the provinces
and princely states which had taken no account of linguistic demar-

cations. The time had now come to implement the imprudent promises and make the boundaries of the states coincide with the major linguistic frontiers. But this was like opening a Pandora's box. Its sponsors, who had put it on the platform of Congress in 1920, had overlooked the fact that it might very well be a springboard for the awakening of *local* nationalisms at the expense of a purely *Indian* nationalism—which, after all, might have been only a manifestation of anti-British feeling in the old days, likely to dissolve soon after the abdication of the British Raj. Oblivious of the danger, the Nehru Committee had vigorously stated in 1928 that the existing provinces should be regrouped into homogeneous linguistic units.

It was not long after the "communal" (religious) tensions had died down that Congress awoke to the full implications of their imprudent promises. By 1948, the centrifugal danger had become plain and the J.V.P. Committee headed by Nehru, Patel and Pattabhai Sitaramayya admitted that "when the Congress had given the seal of its approval to the general principle of linguistic provinces, it was not faced with the practical application of the principle and hence it had not considered all the implications and consequences that arose from this practical application."[4] Before they had had time to ponder the problem at greater length, serious developments in South India overtook them and compelled them to start implementing their own stated program. Nehru had become determined to fight against the trend toward linguistic states; but it was too late, now. The Pandora's box had been opened and out of it came ominous threats to the cohesiveness of India.

Trouble started almost immediately in the south, considerably spurred by the Communist Party. As early as 1952, the Communists championed the demand of the Telugu-speaking populations for a separate Andhra state. Bolstered by the fast-unto-death of the holy man Sri Potti Sriramula, the movement gathered such momentum that Nehru had to give in and agree to the formation of an Andhra state in 1953. The Malayalam-speaking areas of the southwest were then joined together to form the state of Kerala. In Tamil-speaking Madras, a political movement known as Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (also known as Black Shirts) arose which combined the strong anti-Brāhmin and anti-northern Indian (Brāhmins being presumed to be the descendants of Aryan invaders from the north into the Dravidian south) with demands for the virtual independence of the Tamil Nad state from the Indian Union. Bloody riots attended the

agitation for the formation of a Kannada-speaking state in the spring of 1953. And to crown it all, in South India, where the Dravidian speeches have no linguistic connections with the Sanskrit-based tongues of the north, feelings run high whenever there is any mention of the establishment of Hindi as the national language of India instead of English.

The question of all the states' boundaries was now opened and a States Reorganization Commission came into being. No sooner was the Andhra question settled than the problem of the Maharashtrians (Marāthī-speaking people) presented itself forcibly. Spread out athwart several of the old provinces and princely states (Bombay, Madhya-Pradesh and Hyderabad), the Maharashtrians dreamed of a Samjukta (United) Maharashtra state that would include large slices of all these areas. Vigorous and warlike, they soon took matters out of the hands of the Commission and came to blows in Bombay with the Gujāratis, who would not hear of the inclusion of the city of Bombay within the borders of a Maharashtra state. But the Gujāratis themselves had claims on a consolidated Gujārati state that would include large slices of Bombay, along with the states of Saurashtra and Kutch. A social problem grafted itself onto an already complex situation because, in mixed areas, the hard-working Gujāratis are more prosperous and wealthier than the Maharashtrians.

As soon as the Congress Working Committee decided, not merely to divide Bombay state between the contenders, but to make Bombay city into a separate state of its own, everything broke loose. Faced with explosions of violence almost reminiscent of those that had taken place at the time of Partition, New Delhi decided to take a hand. After having changed its mind several times during the course of a few months, the central government came up with the astonishing decision, not merely to cancel the division of Bombay state but to enlarge it into a completely multilingual state by including in it all Gujārati-speaking states and districts: a huge area with over fifty million people, far too large for convenient administrative purposes. The Maharashtrians were mildly satisfied but not so the Gujāratis who, fearful of being at the mercy of an alien majority, rioted in Ahmedabad.

There was no telling how far the controversy raging between Sikhs and Hindus over the script (Gurumukhi versus Nagari) in which Punjabi should be written would go because it is closely connected with the latent separatist tendencies of many Sikhs in the Punjab. A

violent organization known as the Shriromani Akali Dal was in fact looking forward to a Sikh-majority state, which demand was disguised as a claim for a division of an already truncated Punjab into Hindi- and Punjabi-speaking states (religious conflicts having temporarily gone out of fashion in the early 1950's, all such demands had to be dressed up as linguistic claims). Further trouble between West Bengal and Bihar outlined the fact that such problems are likely to erupt almost anywhere in India. Increasingly frightened by these fissiparous tendencies, the Congress leaders announced a merger between the two states—a measure so unpopular in view of the old and enduring enmity between Bihari and Bengali that it had to be discreetly dropped.

A further complication was introduced when the government decided to implement a program of long standing—replace English with Hindi as the national language of India. The obstacles were and are immense: the great majority of the Indians do not know Hindi, many are unwilling to learn it and accept it as the national language (especially in Madras and Bengal, where the opposition is almost unanimous). Some languages such as Bengali, Gujārati and Tamil have far greater literary distinction than Hindi and Bengalis refuse to stoop to accepting Hindi as the all-India national tongue merely because it happens to be spoken by a greater number of people. Furthermore, if Hindi is to replace English, it would have to be built up by a commission of experts into a modern language rich enough to accommodate the complex vocabulary needed in this industrial age. It would have to be taught systematically in all schools all over the country. And many thoughtful Indians are aware that discarding English would be a great loss to India.

Meantime, English remains the sole element of linguistic unity in this Tower of Babel. But even this element is weakening. All through the 1950's, the standards of English in all academic institutions and especially at the University level declined steadily and alarmingly. The shift to regional languages took place at the expense of English; but the decline of the English language hardly benefited Hindi at all. Even before this took place, the ultimate consequences were foreseen and feared; in 1949, the University Education Commission stated that English "has become so much a part of our national habit that a plunge into an altogether different system [replacing English as media of instruction with regional languages] seems attended with unusual risks. It appears to us, however, that the plunge is inevi-

table."⁵ The result of all these controversies and lack of firm and consistent policy is linguistic and educational chaos, with serious possibilities of eventually becoming administrative and political anarchy.

In all these controversies, the point that was missed by one and all was that India's political unity was not something to be taken for granted but something to be worked at and built up systematically: the cultural unity was inherited from the past—and that, in any case, was based on respect for multiplicity and diversity; the administrative unity was inherited from the British; but the political one had to be built up through a massive educational effort. To date this has not been done. In spite of democratic elections, India under Nehru is ruled by a small English-speaking class which is largely estranged from the masses of India—the century-old Indian pattern whereby government and administration are disconnected from the bulk of the people and are conducted in a court language which is unintelligible to them. This explains the fact that since Independence party politics have declined on the national level while becoming more active on the regional and state level, where they express themselves in the vernaculars. The preservation of India's unity through the medium of the English language can only be at the expense of representative political institutions—a basic fact which the Caesarian nature of Nehru's regime has concealed. This alone makes it very doubtful whether a parliamentary democracy on an all-India scale can survive the Nehrunian regime.

Political unity had been built up during the British period—built up *against* the British, more than anything else. An important factor that helped preserve India's unity after Independence was the strong unity of the Congress Party itself, both at the center and in the states, carrying on under the old momentum inherited from British days. The latent centrifugal tendencies were automatically concealed, except for the linguistic furor. Whatever unity might have been lacking in the actual administrative relations between the center and the states was more than made up by the unifying cement of a single political party in power all over India. Thanks to this unifying element, and thanks to Nehru's immense prestige, the balance of power was definitely tilted in favor of New Delhi and all residuary powers were vested in the union, not the states.

It is certainly remarkable to what an extent India, in the 1950's, was able to evolve its new political and social forms with full regard for the due process of law. But every time the independent judiciary

made an attempt to hamper certain social changes (in the matter of reserving seats for the backward classes of Madras in educational institutions, in the matter of the freedom of the press or in connection with the abolition of the *zamindārs,* for example), the Lok Sabha, prodded by Nehru, introduced the necessary amendments to the constitution—thanks to the overwhelming majority of Congress in the federal Parliament. Inevitably, the power of the center grew with each amendment, especially in matters of economic planning.

However, legal definitions are not likely to weigh very much, in the long run. Regardless of the constitution and its amendments, the balance between federal and state powers will aways depend far more on personalities than on the Indian constitution—and there is no doubt that Nehru's Caesarian stature has done more to strengthen the center than anything else. This is what makes the prospect of his disappearance so ominous, with all that it will entail in the way of possible disintegration of the Congress Party. And just as the disruption of the Democratic Party in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century was the inevitable prelude to Secession and the Civil War, the coming to power of opposition parties in various Indian states will effectively weaken the center. No political party that will be simultaneously in power in one or several states, and in opposition at the center, will be able to resist the temptation of playing up the local issues against federal power, letting loose the immense centrifugal forces lurking behind the seemingly monolithic façade of the Congress Party.

This underlying tendency toward Balkanization is further complicated by the most baffling set of social and economic problems likely to present themselves anywhere in the world. The most peculiar feature of India today, as it has been for thousands of years, is the caste system with its multitudes of semi-autonomous castes and subcastes sharply separated from one another and mutually exclusive to an extreme degree. Even today, the foreigner who has just arrived in India, and whose impressions are not yet blunted by too great a familiarity with the human scene, notices immediately the tremendous differences in human types—the impression immediately recorded that India has never actually condensed into national unity but still consists of a fantastic conglomeration of ethnic groups of all kinds, all sharply distinct from one another in type and in standards of living. We know that in northern India, especially, anthro-

pological studies carried out in our century reveal that the hierarchic
order established by caste and social custom corresponds closely with
the hierarchy established by physical measurements—especially nasal
and cephalic indices.[6] And one can do no better than quote a con-
temporary authority on the subject; referring to the state of Uttar
Pradesh, for example, Professor P. C. Mahalanobis states: "The
Brāhmins occupy the highest social position in Hindu society at the
top of the picture, and have the largest build of face and body with
tall stature, large facial breadth, and comparatively large nasal
length and biggest nasal depth but narrow nasal breadth. As one
goes down from the top to the bottom of the picture there is a steady
decrease in both social status and physical size."[7]

It has often been claimed that the caste system is breaking down
under the impact of industrialization and urbanization. This is only
partly true. The caste system is like the tropical jungle: it is forever
collapsing and re-forming itself just as fast. It is all-pervasive, insidi-
ously rebuilding itself along different lines under the impact of al-
tered conditions. As Dr. Sampurnanand, Chief Minister of Uttar
Pradesh, said in a speech to the state legislature in 1959: "Casteism
has been in our blood for hundreds of years." And the *Times of In-
dia* reported in March, 1959: "Casteism is no longer confined to
electioneering; its influence is to be seen in the administration as
well. This appeared to be the burden of the speeches made by mem-
bers of the Uttar Pradesh Legislature during the Budget debate."[8]
Statistics were then produced showing that the state administration
was overwhelmingly dominated by the two top castes, Brāhmins and
Kayasthas. And evidence from other states pointed to the growing
monopolistic power of certain castes wherever there are no legal safe-
guards for the protection of the underprivileged. Casteism is very
strong in the Congress Party, so much so that caste often determines
whether a candidate will get the Congress Party nomination. In such
states as Bihar, caste feuding is of overriding political importance
and castes fight each other bitterly for spoils and jobs.

What has been and is really happening now is a considerable *ac-
celeration* of the tempo of changes within the caste system under
the impact of industrialization and urbanization. In fact, and up to
a point, the rigid *castes* are melting down under the increasing im-
pact of fast communications and blast furnaces, and are becoming,
once again, more or less fluid *social classes*. But what they have to
give up in one way they get back some other way. Gandhi may have

sensed this intuitively when he advocated a return to the Vedic four-fold division of society as far better than the abolition of caste alto-gether—that is, in fact, a return to a class society rather than a caste society. Meantime, all efforts to break down the caste system as such and streamline Indian society in equalitarian fashion have failed, and are likely to fail in the foreseeable future. What the Indian soci-ologists term *caste patriotism* is a stark reality today and has to be taken in dead earnest as an important element of India's centrifugal pattern. An Indian sociologist sums up the situation thus:

The community-aspect of caste has thus been made more com-prehensive, extensive, and permanent. More and more of an indi-vidual's interests are being catered for by caste, and the needy who are helped by their caste funds naturally owe much to their caste and later in life look upon it with feelings of gratitude and pride. They feel it their proud duty to strengthen the caste-organization, remem-bering their obligations to it. Thus a vicious circle has been created. The feeling of caste-solidarity is now so strong that it is truly de-scribed as caste-patriotism.[9]

With the dissolution of British power, the official sanction for the caste system disappeared; only the depressed groups and untoucha-bles remain entitled to some form of protection by the state. But the vitality of caste in social life is just as strong as ever.[10] The fact that the younger generation tends, sometimes, to disregard the rules of caste when marrying does not mean that caste consciousness is dis-appearing, but merely that it is *changing* under the impact of new economic conditions. But even then, the ties of blood are immensely strong in India. The old castes, with many centuries of traditional self-rule and organizational ability behind them, have faced up to the modern dangers and many of them have set up social centers restricted to their own members. Apartment buildings are built for members of specific castes, and so are co-operative banks, commu-nity centers, maternity homes, hospitals. Since Independence, an increasing number of caste newspapers and reviews have been en-couraging the feeling of caste solidarity.[11] Inevitably, the ties of kin-ship mean that caste solidarity has a tremendous impact on the political and administrative life of independent India.

Obviously, this increasing caste solidarity tends to benefit the up-per castes and penalizes the underprivileged groups. Inevitably, it generates counteractions. Anti-Brāhmin feeling has been running

strong in some areas, ever since the Justice Party arose in Madras in the early 1920's. After Gandhi's assassination anti-Brāhmin action erupted violently, especially in Maharashtrian areas. And even though the Justice Party was crushed in the first elections of 1936–1937, its spiritual successor, the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham, has been militant in its anti-Brāhmin and anti-northern Indian attitude under a vague Marxist cloak of propaganda in favor of social equality. We thus find that similar contradictory movements coexist in India, where in some areas the monopolistic power of the upper castes increases steadily while in others (South India, especially, and to a lesser extent, Maharashtria) the Brāhmins face severe discrimination and are sometimes compelled to emigrate to other states.

Behind the enduring caste instinct, there remains, faintly concealed, an enduring *racial* feeling. It is noticeable that the usual social hierarchy tends, more or less, to coincide with gradations in the color of the skin. And a perusal of the matrimonial sections of many Indian newspapers, with their frequent references to "fairness" of skin proves conclusively that racial considerations are still extremely important.

This applies, in particular, to the very large number of untouchables (Scheduled Castes, in official jargon) who numbered, according to the census of 1951, over fifty-one million.[12] Even though the Indian government is actively seeking to protect them and to help them climb up the social ladder, they still suffer from abominable discrimination. Their integration within the folds of Indian society proceeds exceedingly slowly. And as a notable Indian expert on the caste problem asserts, since Independence, "As against this long list of anti-Scheduled castes actions I have been able to garner only one reported case of caste Hindus actively helping their integration."[13] The strength of the caste instinct in India can be accurately gauged by comparison with the strength of modern racial discrimination in various Western nations and the speed with which virtual castes form themselves today in our own modern multi-racial societies. It would be pure illusion to imagine that caste is about to disappear in India; the dream of an equalitarian Indian society is no nearer actualization today than it was generations ago. Of changes there are plenty; but so far as streamlining this social jungle goes, there is no hope for the foreseeable future.

The problem of caste and the fate of the untouchables are inti-

mately connected, in rural areas where the vast majority of the Indian population lives, with the problem of land reform. This problem was not and could not be tackled by the federal government; it was within the jurisdiction of the various states, which was only natural since conditions differ considerably from one part of the country to the other. The most extreme form of parasitic landlordism, the *zamindāri* system as created by the old Permanent Settlement of the British, was completely abolished. But land reform aiming at the fulfillment of the slogan "land to the tiller" remained far from actualization. Other forms of direct or indirect landlordism persisted all through the 1950's, and the *baniā* moneylender still oppressed many villages with his usurious rates because there were not enough financial resources to build up rural credit.

It was inevitable that, in a country where 80 per cent of the population lives on and from the land, the agrarian reform should become one of the major planks of any political platform. The extremely low standard of living of a great part of the three hundred million people living in rural areas, some of whom lived and still live continuously in a state of semi-starvation, prompted some generous-minded social leaders to seek for voluntary reform—a reform of the heart in order to avoid the drastic and bloody revolution implied by the more radical Communist methods. Sometime in 1948, a relatively obscure personality by the name of Vinoba Bhave emerged from Gandhi's *ashram* as the Mahatma's successor in his social work. All through the 1950's, idealistic Bhave promoted actively a succession of schemes centered around the voluntary gift of land—even of entire villages in his *Bhoodan-gramdan* campaign. The movement developed, hundreds of thousands of acres were given free to Bhave, who then proceeded either to redistribute it to landless peasants, or, at a later stage, to form co-operative organizations of production. He then went on to advocate communal ownership of entire villages. Whatever the specific merits of that particular movement, it is an indication of what can be carried out in India in the way of social reform when the old atavistic religious instinct is awakened and properly channeled. It may not be equal to the administrative complexities of such a massive movement of land redistribution; but the mere fact that it could attract such men as the ex-Marxist Jayaprakash Narayan proves beyond a doubt that India can devise methods of social reform that might be incomparably superior to anything devised elsewhere. And Bhave's effective demolition of the agrarian

terror launched by the Communists in Telengana after Independence is a tangible proof that Marxism is ineffective when a true spiritual impulse sets out to sponsor political and social reforms.

The eventual solution of India's complex land problem lies in massive industrialization. This had been grasped by Congress leaders before Independence and the groundwork of a series of Five Year Plans was laid accordingly. The remarkable feature of this experiment is that never in history has a large nation of four hundred million people, under a regime of parliamentary democracy, given the state such an important part to play in the economic development of the country. And never, even at the start of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, was a country so plagued with almost insoluble economic problems as India is today. The building up of India's modern industrial power, relatively slow during the first half of our century, was considerably accelerated under the First and Second Five Year Plans, both of them grandiose experiments worthy of respect considering the fact that they were undertaken in a country where free elections and universal suffrage prevail. In Russia yesterday, and in China today, vast masses of people are inhumanly dragooned into a Pharaonic system of forced labor which, however wasteful and inefficient, cannot help producing some results in the long run. In India, the execution of the Five Year Plans has been and is carried out in an atmosphere of political liberty and with full respect for human values.

Inevitably, the shortcomings of economic planning in such a country as India are considerable. The Indian administration, both at the center and in the states, is not too efficient, and there is too much centralization in the running of state-owned enterprises. Simultaneously, the rate of planning and of actual economic development was far too low in the 1950's to cope effectively with the pressure of a rapidly increasing population. If one takes into account the fact that the population of India increased by over eighty million between Independence and 1960, the staggering size of the problem becomes obvious: fully industrialized countries after World War II still developed economically at a much faster rate than India, in spite of the Five Year Plans. Far from being solved, the chronic unemployment worsened steadily in the 1950's even though the rate was slowed down. It is very much like mounting leisurely an escalator descending at full speed: starvation and famines will continue to threaten so long as the Indian crop yields, now close to being the lowest in the world, are not raised fast.

One of the main causes of this unsatisfactory rate of development was an inheritance from the colonial past—the more or less exclusive ties between fully industrialized Britain and its colonial possessions which stunted the normal growth of inter-Asian trade. One of the by-products has been a lack of integration between India's own economic planning and the economic development of its neighbors, complicated by political and social tensions of all kinds—the problem of the distribution of irrigation water between West Pakistan and India, the quarrels with Ceylon over the large number of Tamil immigrants from Madras, the hostility toward Indian moneylenders in Burma. Many areas of Southeast Asia could provide foodstuff to underfed India in exchange for Indian industrial goods. But political considerations stand in the way.

The great problem in India today is not merely how to speed up capital formation in the true financial sense but how to invest also in its human potential—how to develop the purely "human" capital. No foreigner in India can help being struck by the obvious signs of malnutrition and ill-health displayed by the shriveled bodies of so many undernourished men and women whose standards of living are often subhuman. And in the same way, the Indian mind is underdeveloped: the rate of literacy is extremely low and the standards of higher education in colleges and universities declined steadily during the 1950's, partly because of growing indiscipline among the students. The most urgent task after Independence was, and still remains, to drag large portions of the Indian population out of the physical and mental bog in which they have sunk over the centuries without waiting for the long-term impact of today's industrialization. The great question is whether fundamental reforms that are urgently needed can be carried out by purely democratic means under a regime of free elections and parliamentary rule—even with all the benefits of an exceptional Caesarian rule.

Everywhere in India, it was and is obvious that unemployment or underemployment is widespread, that the continual wastage of human potential is enormous—because it is not stirred up and organized. This is not just an economic problem. It affects the morale of many Indians and deprives them of the normal pride and self-confidence that spring naturally from a hard-working and useful life. Quite apart from large-scale industrialization, which can only employ a small fraction of the working population, there is no lack of work to be done: building and repairing roads, digging wells, planting trees, cleaning up the villages. Even popular education can be

enormously speeded up without having to wait for new schools, thanks to the Indian climate. An imaginative Indian government would also use its large standing army to train the Indian youth and instill into it a taste for hard work, organization, efficiency and discipline that are the very basis of army life—through some form of compulsory national service for all youngsters of a certain age, for instance. In all these respects, the Nehrunian regime in the 1950's fell far short of its requirements.

The great problem is one of organization and actual mobilization of all this wasted energy in an effort to win the great economic battle —wasted energy which becomes socially as dangerous as dynamite when it takes the form of hundreds of thousands of educated youths who cannot find suitable employment in a country which has actually too few educated youngsters. Industrialization is no short-term panacea because it does not raise the level of employment; and it can even increase unemployment by putting out of business entire segments of the old craft and artisan class if they are left unprotected. India's economic problem is really twofold: industrialization and *simultaneously* increased work and employment outside industry. The demographic pressure is terrific and cannot be relieved by mere industrialization—that is the dramatic problem facing a country whose population will have soared to 800 million before the century is over. Many organizations exist already: adult literacy centers, youth organizations of all kinds, community developments, farmers' clubs, *Gram Sahayaks'* camps where natural leaders are trained in rural areas. But many exist only in rudimentary form, or simply on paper.

The socialistic inclinations of Jawaharlal Nehru date from far back; but for a long time they were not shared by a majority of the members of Congress. With the disappearance of Gandhi and Patel, however, and the elimination of brilliant conservatives such as Rajagopolachari, Nehru was left in full possession of the Caesarian throne, free to shape the structure and policy of Congress as he saw fit. The first general elections of 1952 symbolized a radical alteration in the composition of the Congress Party: its upper-class leadership, that which had guided it through the difficult years of the struggle for independence (lawyers, doctors, landowners and wealthy businessmen), largely disappeared. Under Nehru's Caesarian leadership, the middle class shrank back and it was the broad rural masses that propelled the Congress Party to power with a massive majority of

three-quarters of the seats in Parliament. Soon enough, the swing toward the left became apparent: the "socialist pattern of society" was clearly stated as the Congress Party's goal at the session of Avadi (1955). Soon the "pattern" was dropped, and the goal became plain, naked Socialism at the session of Amritsar (1956). Congress constantly widened its base but in fact weakened itself and its true impact; words often became substitutes for acts.

In India as in China, it would have been sheer illusion to think that the Western-style capitalism could flourish and be popular. It is not only a matter of social and economic organization; it is also psychological. Money-making as such has always been despised in India (except during the phase of transition from Culture to Civilization, twenty-three hundred years ago) and businessmen, however wealthy, always ranked behind the poorest Brāhmin, deprived of true prestige and influence, subservient to military and political power incarnate in the Kṣatriyas. The Vaisya, merchant, trader and banker, was free to indulge in his financial pursuits, but within stern limits, and was traditionally looked down upon. And as a contemporary Indian sociologist asserts: "Of all the sections of a society this class has shown itself to be the shrewdest in evading taxation, and the low rank assigned to it by old Chinese social thinkers shows better appreciation of its anti-social potentialities."[14] There is no need to be very modern in one's outlook in order to distrust unrestrained capitalism; in India, one has only to refer to such sacred text as the *Aitereya Brāhmaṇa* to find all the anti-capitalist ammunition needed. And it cannot be overlooked that one of the mainsprings of Nehru's socialistic convictions comes from some aristocratic atavism of his own Kashmiri Brāhmin background.

Western-style capitalism has no deep roots in a country that has known in the past mostly varieties of socialized economy. Some return to traditional economic forms was inescapable. Modern Indian economic thought inevitably began to veer toward some form of socialistic planning—compelled partly by Nehru's own convictions, partly by the political swing to the left of Congress under the impulse of adult suffrage, partly also by the realization that without far more massive help from abroad than was forthcoming, private savings could not accumulate at a sufficiently rapid rate in view of the staggering rate of population increase. And one cannot overlook the fact that it was also spurred by the illusion that the only effective defense against Communism is a large dose of socialism.

Inevitable though it was, this swing toward Socialism under Neh-

ru's impulse need not have been so harmful as it proved to be. The implicit hostility toward private business, both Indian and foreign, damaged the climate for private investments. Yet, little effective progress was made in a truly socialistic direction. As a result, India got the worst of both worlds. Even a conservative could criticize India in the 1950's, not for aiming at Socialism but for not moving fast enough in that direction. India was and still is so far removed from true Socialism that it is almost ludicrous to fear any such development. Social inequality is greater in India than in any capitalist country dedicated to free enterprise. No perceptive foreigner can help being struck by the ironic contrast between the socialistic opinions voiced by many Indian leaders and the fact that they seem to find it quite natural to be surrounded by hordes of underfed servants, bearers, sweepers and low-caste men.

In point of fact, there is always, and in every country, too much talk about Socialism versus capitalism—in India, about public versus private sector. As in other respects, in India, the true aim should be the fastest development of both *simultaneously*. A hue and cry was raised early in 1959 when Congress adopted the famous and controversial "Nagpur Resolution," aiming at the introduction of co-operatives in agriculture—but in the Scandinavian countries and to a lesser degree in many other economically advanced countries throughout the world, trade in agricultural goods is regulated by co-operatives. The crux of the matter is that the population increase threatens constantly to outstrip the slow rise of food output and that whatever type of landownership and distribution of production is best suited to raise food output should be adopted. The implementation of land reform usually decreases crop yields and India cannot afford this luxury. Where would the skilled managers of the co-operatives and the required capital come from? Neither Congress nor Nehru provided the answer. As usual, it was more a matter of political propaganda than of concrete and well-thought-out policy. And, once again, it was the ever-widening gap between promises and fulfillment that seemed most threatening.

Regardless of the abstract merits of the modern socialistic trend in India, the question still remained unanswered—the question whether socialism could be introduced, or, as the case may be, re-established, in an old society such as India without entailing a scrapping of political freedom and compulsion bolstered by terror and a dictatorial regime? Could it be achieved in an atmosphere of political freedom

without entailing widespread corruption? And could it be carried out in a huge country such as India without awakening its immense centrifugal forces?

Thus, like the famous chariot of Jagannatha (or Juggernaut), Lord of the World, which is dragged once a year across the streets of Puri, Nehru's Congress has steam-rolled all opposition. A conjunction of India's atavistic indifference to historical development and the contemporary mood of the essentially pragmatic West shaped Nehru's India and its Congress Party. No worth-while opposition stood against it because it had an unparalleled leader, a true Caesarian figure. In Jawaharlal Nehru, India had found a remarkable reincarnation of Emperor Asoka. No other man could really hope to challenge his rule—no other man, certainly; but *ideas* might, and have. Caesarian rule has its shortcomings, inasmuch as it is a makeshift, an expedient. The Caesarian ruler is, by definition, the only unifying element in a society that has, temporarily or permanently, lost its traditional beliefs and moorings, or cannot rely on them in a revolutionary world—a society that can no longer generate that common outlook and philosophy of life that holds it together as an organic entity, under collective leadership. Caesarism is the only type of rulership that can, up to a point and for a while, substitute for it.

However, at a time of world-wide revolutionary changes such as ours, a time when alien civilizations and conflicting philosophies are constantly clashing, a makeshift Caesarian rule in a country that is partly outside the orbit of the dominant (Western, today) civilization, cannot withstand for long the assault of ideologies that can stir the soul of its active and thoughtful elites. Some ideologies may be indigenous, some alien. Such an alien ideology is Communism; and a study of its impact on India throws a great deal of light on the possible future course of Indian history.

XX

Red India

THE contrast between China and India when the October
Revolution broke out in Russia in 1917 was striking. In China, there
was chaos following the overthrow of the Manchu imperial dynasty;
in India, peace and order prevailed under the domination of the
British Raj. China was free from colonial domination but powerless;
India was under British colonial domination but exerted a powerful
influence all around—the future independent states of Pakistan,
Burma and Ceylon were included in the Indian Empire, Tibet was
under a virtual Anglo-Indian protectorate and Afghanistan was
more or less neutralized after the Afghan War of 1919. In other
words, China was a center of weakness and India a center of
strength.

But the differences in depth were even greater—differences in cul-
tural background and psychological dispositions. The more worldly
and vulnerable civilization of China was collapsing; India's more
religious civilization was still alive and was experiencing a resurgence
indirectly stimulated by Europe's disintegrating culture. There was no
spiritual void in India that was in any way comparable with China's,
no anxious search for new codes of morality comparable to China's
desperate attempt to replace the dying Confucian one. There was
only the very beginning of a stirring of the Indian masses, but also
the swift development of political consciousness among the elites: the
approaching struggle for freedom from an outdated British imperial-
ism was going to engage the best Indian minds and characters, and
leave little room for anything else, for thirty years.

The first introduction of Communism in India has to be viewed
against this particular Indian background. Until 1914, the rule of
the British Raj remained unchallenged, in spite of sporadic agitation
in Bengal. But the war itself did more to shake the foundations of

that great empire than any local agitation could have in a thousand years. As in China after the turn of the century, old social systems which were none too perfect in any case were becoming increasingly inadequate. And as in China, the main social problem was the agrarian one, the problem of the growing indebtedness of the peasant. What had been a mild and bearable inconvenience through the centuries was now becoming an intolerable burden. In India this burden was made worse by the fact that the Permanent Settlement had institutionalized in some parts of India a new class of parasitic *zamindārs*, whose moneylending activities were fully sanctioned by the state. But rural indebtedness was common to both the Chinese and the Indian peasantries, caused in large part by the tremendous and rapidly growing pressure of fast-increasing populations which even the worst famines could not check—aggravated in India by the collapse of the village industry in the nineteenth century. And it was not until the advent of Gandhi that India's rural masses began to stir and become conscious of their unjustified plight. They were stirred, not so much by a traditionally unsatisfactory state of affairs as by an actual *worsening* of their situation after the turn of the century—as was also the case in China. And, as in China, "money-lenders were steadily adding to their landed possessions in most provinces," in the words of a Royal Agricultural Commission.[1]

The industrial and urban proletariat grew steadily in numbers during and after the First World War. But, again as in China, it was too small and bewildered by its new surroundings to become a major political force. It retained its distant roots in the rural villages from whence it originated.

Thus, in many respects, the social situation of the farmers and of the urban proletariat of India was similar to that of China. And as in China, it was mostly the intelligentsia that felt the impact of Marxism after the October Revolution—but far more mildly in India. It is therefore in a confrontation of Marxist values and India's traditional culture that we must seek for the key to an understanding of Indian Communism rather than in the plight of the downtrodden rural and urban masses. And this key, as might be guessed by anyone who is familiar with Indian history and culture, is to be found in the *ahistorical* nature of the Indian *Weltanschauung*, that atavistic lack of awareness of history and therefore indifference to any interpretation of an element presumed to be non-existent.

Without being quite aware of it, the *Program of the Communist*

International adopted by the First World Congress in Moscow (September, 1920) pointed this out plainly:

Tendencies like Gandhism in India, thoroughly imbued with religious conceptions, idealize the most backward and economically most reactionary forms of social life, see the solution of the social problem not in proletarian socialism, but in a reversion to these backward forms, preach passivity and repudiate the class struggle, and in the process of the development of the revolution become transformed into an openly reactionary force. Gandhism is more and more becoming an ideology directed against mass revolution. It must be strongly combated by Communism.[2]

From the very start of this momentous struggle, the Marxist position was clear and sharply outlined. And a previous analysis of Gandhism has shown that it was, to a very great extent, the natural expression of the reaction of the Indian masses to the new revolutionary situation of the times. Gandhi and the Congress Party captured the Indian peasants and made their problems their own, whereas the Kuomintang gradually lost the Chinese peasants to Mao Tse-tung's Communists. And the urban proletariat of India was no more fertile field for Marxist proselytism than its Chinese counterpart. All that was left to it was an insignificant fraction of the middle-class intelligentsia.

As in China, it was an open question whether a Communist movement could have been started and organized at all in India, had it not been for quick and massive aid from Soviet Russia—which was soon forthcoming. Lines of communication were established through Sinkiang, Afghanistan and Persia; Comintern agents were recruited from the scattered remains of the Bengal terrorism (such as Nalini Gupta and Abani Mukherji) and from former members of the Ghadr Party, as well as from the fanatical Muslim Muhajirin, who had left India for Tashkent, in Soviet Turkestan, in protest against Britain's Afghan War of 1919. But, obviously, the main task was the establishment of a strong Indian Communist Party in India itself; lines of communication were useless if they led nowhere.

For a while, Moscow flirted with the idea of setting up a purely Indian Communist Party, and the first pillar on which it sought to base this was a brilliant Bengali intellectual, Manabendra Nath Roy. However, working mostly in Europe or Soviet Russia, he soon came

into conflict with other men of similar persuasion who were working in India—Shripat Amri Dange and Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya. Incessant conflicts almost wrecked the nascent movement and, in a fit of cynical realism, the exasperated Soviet high priests decided to withdraw the consecration from Roy and entrusted the fate of Indian Communism to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) —a paradoxical and ironical extension of British imperial rule over India as the infuriated Roy correctly pointed out.[3] It was R. Palme Dutt, an outstanding member of Britain's Communist party, who became the leader of Indian Marxism. From then on, Roy's influence faded and, in spite of his violent protests, British Communists took over full direction of India's budding Communist movement.

It was a strange fate for Indian Communism that it was almost entirely organized and inspired by Europeans in the 1920's. Percy E. Gladings, Philip Spratt, Benjamin Francis Bradley, Hugh Lester Hutchinson were a few among many Englishmen who organized labor unions, channeled Soviet funds into India, prepared the revolts in the Punjab and organized the fellow-traveling Workers' and Peasants' Party in the United Provinces.

The reason for this change of tactics is undoubtedly the fact that the Indians would have proved unable to set up a Communist movement by themselves in such unfertile soil as India—and also that the British Communists were better equipped to cope with the British Raj. They had to move with great caution because of the vigilance of the same British Raj and worked mainly through the sham Workers' and Peasants' Party (WPP). The Communist Party of India (CPI) proper, founded in 1925 by Satya Bhakta, remained weak and neglected, and at one point almost fell under the control of the Workers' and Peasants' Party—a heresy by orthodox Soviet standards. Searching their minds for a correct understanding of the basic problems confronting Communist action in the Orient—and also for an effective policy—the Comintern passed a comprehensive resolution in 1928 and came belatedly to the conclusion that "The communists will become the trusted leaders of the masses only by giving concrete form to the latter's unconscious demands."[4] It was decided that the WPP would become the legal instrument and mouthpiece of a concealed and illegal CPI, enter into alliances with other leftist organizations and serve as a disguise for the concealed activities of the Communists proper.

Given their unparalleled sense of organization and consummate

skill in all the revolutionary techniques, it was evident that, with massive help from Moscow, the Communists would soon begin their assault on the urban and industrial proletariat of India. In 1920, following the considerable industrialization of India during the First World War, an All-India Trade Union Congress had come into being under the inspiration of Great Britain's similar body. Labor organizations had acquired considerable strength and importance in 1925 and 1926 when the Communists started their political offensive. Communist influence increased steadily in these organizations until 1928. The time had come to hit as hard as they could, and in 1928–1929 waves of strikes and outbursts of violence followed each other in quick succession; the Communists were testing their strength but soon found it wanting. A vigorous and decisive repression by the government resulted in the arrest of more than thirty among the main Communist leaders in 1929. Their trial disclosed the fantastic Communist network that had already spread over a great deal of India with external assistance. But although the nature of the Communist conspiracy was plain, the struggle against the British Raj blunted the common sense of most nationalists and aroused a feeling of sympathy for the accused of the "Meerut Conspiracy Case" in the hearts of many leaders of Congress who were later to fight them with great bitterness. Many of them, including Jawaharlal Nehru, acted as defense lawyers on behalf of the Communist leaders.

Nevertheless, it was a hard blow for the Indian Reds. Their first test of strength was a dismal failure—and this happened at a time when Gandhi was about to launch his mass disobedience campaign and wrest all revolutionary initiative from the hands of the Marxists. The Indian Communists kept aloof from the nationalist struggle, displayed their internationalism by stating their solidarity with the British workers in Lancashire and fought Gandhi's non-violent methods. At a time when Chinese Communism, under Mao Tse-tung's brilliant leadership, was beginning to evolve its own doctrines and techniques, Indian Communists were following slavishly the completely unrealistic directives of the Comintern and clumsily flouting the nationalist feelings of most Indians. The Comintern in 1928 had laid down the line: "The communists must unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all the phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., about passive resistance."[5] And so, following instructions, Indian Communism marched blindly toward its own destruction.

What was the explanation for this oddly unrealistic behavior of Indian Communism? Undoubtedly the fact that India was not a fertile soil for Marxism-Leninism, and therefore that Indian Communism could not recruit leaders of a sufficient intellectual caliber. An irreligious, anti-spiritual philosophy of history could not sink deep roots in a country that had been dedicated for thousands of years to all manners of religious and spiritual pursuits, and that had no instinctive inclination toward a philosophical interpretation of history. What was to become a genuine birth of a new Communist movement in Mao Tse-tung's China remained abortive in India because the weak leadership of Indian Communism remained completely subservient to the Comintern—in fact, found itself unable to develop a specifically *Indian* Communism as Mao Tse-tung was then developing a genuine *Chinese* Communism.

As a result, whatever Communist movement was left in India after the Meerut trial disintegrated into splinter groups—just as the urban-proletarian Communism of China under Moscow's direct authority disintegrated about the same time. But there was no Indian Mao Tse-tung in India to pick up the pieces as Mao picked them up in China. There was the Bombay group headed by G. M. Adhikari, the Calcutta group of Muzaffar Ahmed, and the northern Indian groups led by P. C. Joshi. Each of them broke up into various fragments upon the arrests of their leaders. And just about when Indian Communism was becoming mere dust, Roy reappeared and organized a rival party. Expelled from the Executive Committee of the Communist International, on bad terms with Stalin, he only succeeded in compounding the confusion.

Moscow became genuinely alarmed and decided to alter its policy. Communist agents from all over the world—Britain, Russia, America, Canada and Australia—converged on India, without noticeable improvement in the situation. More important, however, it was being discovered that Indian students attending universities in Britain and other Western countries provided a far more promising source of young Communist leadership than the Indian intellectuals who remained in India. It was certainly not their social background that would have justified their conversion to Marxism. Most of them came from distinctly well-to-do bourgeois families who could afford to send them all the way to Europe to complete their studies. It was rather the intellectual training received in British universities which shared with most other institutions of higher learning in the West

the corrosively agnostic and skeptical outlook of the age. Unable to demoralize the Indian intellectuals who remained in India, close to their roots, contemporary Western teaching had greater success with young Indian intellectuals divorced from their motherland, puzzled, homesick and unable to grasp the emotional comfort of a truly Indian movement such as Gandhism. Whatever Indian Communism existed at the time was largely due to the impact of the disintegrating elements within Western society itself on its Indian pupils. Left to its own devices, unassisted from outside, Marxism would have been snuffed out of existence in India.

In 1934, against the background of the virtual failure of Communism in India, a few young Congressmen founded the Congress Socialist Party. Inevitably, they were plagued at the start by the basic incompatibilities existing between the pragmatic, Anglo-Saxon form of Labourism, which owes a great deal of its inspiration to Christian movements such as Methodism, and the formidable Marxist influences of the European continent. These two tendencies (represented respectively by Minoo R. Masani and Jayaprakash Narayan) had to live together and compromise, and in the process weakened the movement from the very beginning. Furthermore, whether they were democratic Socialists or Marxists, they remained essentially Indian and found it difficult to resist the influence of Gandhism. They suffered from a basic cleavage, not only between more or less incompatible forms of Socialist doctrine, but also between their intellectual dictates and their emotional reactions.

About the same time, shortly after the establishment of the Socialist branch of Congress, Moscow shifted the party line again. The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in 1935 reversed the implacably sectarian policy adopted in 1928. In spite of the Great Depression, Communist parties all over the world had suffered and become isolated. Fascism, German National Socialism and Japanese militarism had become the main beneficiaries of the great economic crisis. The time had come for closer collaboration with other leftist parties in order to counteract the growing danger—to the Soviet motherland, especially—of world-wide right-wing extremism. But, somehow, the Indian Communist Party did not seem to understand the full implications of Moscow's change in tactics. It took a forceful intervention of the British Communist Party, especially of R. Palme Dutt and Benjamin Francis Bradley, to straighten

out the confused Indian Communists and propel them into some sort of "Popular Front" which would include all "anti-imperialist" elements and parties. All the while, of course, the Communist Party of India remained essentially a tool of Soviet Russia's foreign policy: the goal was to put pressure on the British Government and compel it to fall in line with Soviet Russia's anti-German policy. Specifically Indian problems, except insofar as they were linked with this aim, would have to take care of themselves.

In India proper, the new policy was to gain the confidence of Congress leaders, isolate them from their mass following by infiltrating their organization and capture its leadership or at least influence its policy. This aim was no more fulfilled in India than it had been, a decade earlier, in China in respect to the Kuomintang. Congress leaders were no dupes and were not prepared to accept Communist collaboration on any except their own terms. What had been a grievous mistake in the behavior of Congress leaders in regards to the Muslim League was wise in respect to the Communists. The Reds were not discouraged by the open hostility of Congress leaders, however. Their policy became extremely flexible, seeking to establish links with all splinter groups and sympathizing elements, and adapting to all local conditions. They no longer frowned at local and temporary alliances with Royists and Socialists, fought Gandhi's influence inside the Congress, lampooned Vallabhbhai Patel, leader of the right-wing element.

Strenuous efforts eventually paid off. Their only asset inside Congress was the uncertain and confused personality of Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary of the Socialist Party, an intellectual convert to Marxism—ironically enough, during his years as a student in the United States. He was not exactly a Communist but a naïve fellow traveler. It was to him, mostly, that the Communists owed the possibility of concluding the united front agreement with the Socialists early in 1936.[6] A channel was now open and, through this channel, the Communists began a massive infiltration of the Congress Socialist Party, and, to an extent, of the main body of Congress itself. Discreetly or openly, many Communists reached some key positions inside the various groups and parties.

Complaints soon poured in from all over India against the Communists, who were accused of aiming at a complete domination of Congress—so much so that many Communists in the top echelons were compelled to deny their membership in the CPI. And as early

as 1937, most of the genuine Socialists had become alarmed at the
extent of the Communist infiltration. But nothing was done to coun-
teract it. The Communists were able to break up the All-India Stu-
dents' Federation and the All-India Kisan Sabha, taking away large
slices, along with the whole All-India Trade Union Congress and
three of the best branches of the Socialist Party: Tamil Nad, An-
dhra and Kerala, all in South India—which explains the remarka-
ble strength of the Communist movement in South India twenty
years later.

It was not until 1940, several months after the beginning of the
Second World War, that the Congress Socialist Party executive de-
cided to expel the Communists from within its midst. But irreparable
damage had already been done; and, to an extent, the naïve and
unrealistic Socialist Party never recovered from the blow. In a gen-
erous but penitent mood, Jayaprakash Narayan recognized later on
that he had made a cardinal mistake in allying the Socialists with
the Communists; but the CSP was largely wrecked in the process
and the careers of several prominent Communist organizers were
considerably furthered. It was added proof, if any was needed, that
it is impossible to be a consistent Marxist without eventually pro-
moting Communism, directly or indirectly, as all Marxist-based So-
cialist parties have done all over the world.

Following the meandering and devious course of Soviet Russia's
policy during the Second World War, the supine Communist Party
of India found itself alternatively in favorable and unfavorable posi-
tions. During the first part of the war, prior to the German attack
on Russia in 1941, the Indian Reds found themselves in full agree-
ment with Congress' and the Indian nationalists' opposition to par-
ticipation in the war on the side of Great Britain. Yet, having been
expelled by the Congress Socialists, they began virulent attacks
against Congress and the Socialists in the belief that the latter's mod-
eration, motivated by a desire to avoid embarrassing the British need-
lessly, would doom them in the eyes of Indian public opinion. Thus,
thought the Reds, the Communist Party would benefit from the de-
struction of the moderate nationalists and inherit a revolutionary
climate.

But then, the roof fell on their heads: the German attack on Rus-
sia in June, 1941, forced a complete reversal upon all Commu-
nist Parties throughout the world. The confusion inside the CPI was

unimaginable and the Indian Communists had such trouble readjusting to altered circumstances that, for six months, the Indian Politbureau persisted in its anti-war attitude. It took a forceful letter from Harry Pollitt, Secretary of the British Communist Party (delivered by courtesy of the British Home Secretary of the Government of India) to compel it to make an about-face and take up the slogan of a fight for the "People's War." In other words, the Indian Communists were now in the same camp as the British imperialists and produced a new line condemning its own former "bourgeois nationalist deviation."[7]

Having been declared legal in July, 1942, the Communist Party of India attempted to reverse its whole policy and uphold the British war effort at a time when Congress was forced into an increasingly uncompromising anti-war and anti-British attitude. The Communists did everything in their power to sabotage the nationalist activities of Congress, as could be expected. But, far more significant, they wholeheartedly supported the idea of a separate state of Pakistan; and went even further by stating that every linguistic group in India formed a distinct nationality and was entitled to secede from India if it so decided. The mild-mannered but fiery B. T. Ranadive, leader of the left-wing group in the CPI, wrote in the *People's Age* of August, 1942:

> What is the progressive essence of the Pakistan demand? The application of the principle of self-determination to certain nationalities in India. Muslims in certain areas do form a distinct nationality bound together by common culture, history and tradition. In consonance with the demands of justice and fair play, they must have the completest liberty to build their own life, liberty sanctioned by the *right to form a separate State if and when they chose.*[8]

The Communists thus came out more or less openly against the unity of India and in favor of a possible Balkanization of the subcontinent. Like the Muslim League, the Communists eagerly seized the opportunity created by the absence of activity on the part of Congress (most of whose leaders were in prison) to increase the tempo of its political activity to a maximum.

With all that, the net result of their wartime efforts was dismal. They had stood against the main nationalist trend in India, had alienated the Muslim League in spite of their pro-Pakistan attitude, and had lost support among the peasants and the urban proletariat.

They retained some influence among the intellectuals, mostly because it was then fashionable, in India as elsewhere, to be pro-Soviet. And they lost most of the small sympathy and influence they formerly enjoyed in Congress circles.

Between the end of the Second World War and Independence, the Communists found themselves retreating all along the line. Congress and the Socialists rebuilt their trades unions and the Reds soon discovered that their All-India Trades Union Congress (AITUC) was just an empty shell. Everywhere, in every field, they lost the initiative to the nationalists and were completely overwhelmed by the violent explosions taking place—the religious riots, the mutinies in the armed forces, the communal bloodbath, none of which could be explained in Marxist terms. Bewildered but still eager to exploit one and all disturbances and turn them to their own advantage, the Communists split: one group, led by P. C. Joshi, advocated a peaceful policy of infiltration and restraint; another, led by B. T. Ranadive, was all for violence and a militant policy of open insurrection and guerrilla warfare.

After a great deal of confusion and hesitation, the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India, held in Calcutta in February, 1948, adopted the tough "Zhdanov Line" according to which the nationalist movements in India and Southeast Asia had betrayed the "revolution" and should be fought by all means, fair and foul. This was the beginning of the Cold War throughout the world—and the beginning of an attempt on the part of the Indian Communists to seize power by violent means. It was the triumph of the thesis of Ranadive; the Communist Party was purged of all lukewarm elements and a new Central Committee took over dictatorial control of the apparatus. Ranadive felt convinced that the time had come to strike against the Congress "Kerenskys" in New Delhi and guerrilla warfare was openly prepared—indeed, had already started in ominous fashion on the border of Hyderabad and Madras.

In the Telengana area, with headquarters at Bezwada, the Communists started a full-fledged civil war on the pattern of Mao Tsetung's early campaigns in China. Arson and terror and massacres stained wide areas around the Nalgonda and Warrangal districts, where "parallel" governments were set up. Violent disturbances broke out in other areas of Andhra and Malabar, West Bengal, the Ahmednagar district of Bombay, parts of the Punjab and Uttar

Pradesh, and Manipur on the Indo-Burmese border. All these acts of terroristic violence were scheduled to culminate in a monster general strike, spearheaded by a paralyzing all-India railway strike. But the strike never came off. And from then on, the violent action of the CPI began to peter out. Simultaneously, the undaunted Indian Government, under Vallabhbhai Patel's steely direction, repressed all disturbances with ruthless energy—tempered eventually by the soothing influence of Vinoba Bhave's voluntary land-gift movement.

One of the interesting features of this rural rebellion was that in spite of its violence and local effectiveness it did not meet with the approval of Ranadive, to whose orthodox mind the urban and industrial proletariat was still destined to be the leader of the revolution. But the Andhra Communists went their own way, choosing for their model Mao Tse-tung—that is, in those days when China had not yet fallen to the Reds, the moderate Maoism of the "new democracy," tolerant of rural private ownership and rich peasants. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the Andhra Communist Party was dominated by landlords who owned 80 per cent of the fertile land and who all belonged to the Kamma caste.[9] Although the Telengana Communists operated within the boundaries of Hyderabad state more or less autonomously, the Andhra Communists became their spokesmen and champions within the CPI, and provided them with a theoretical base extracted from Chinese Communism. They opposed Ranadive with vehemence and reproached him for following as blindly the Russian line as they followed the Chinese. In the end, they all failed utterly.

The attempt of the Communist Party under Ranadive's leadership to seize power by violent means in 1948 and 1949 had collapsed. This became plain in 1950 when the Indian Reds totted up their losses: no real influence over the proletariat, great losses at the hands of the vigorous repression of the government and loss of all influence over the peasants in most areas of disturbance. Once again, unless a severe effort were made, Indian Communism faced an inevitable disintegration. The CPI was almost bankrupt, and in February, 1950, the energetic Vallabhbhai Patel (then Home Minister) rushed through the provisional Indian Parliament a repressive bill aimed at the Communist movement—followed up in 1951 by the stringent Preventive Detention Bill. The CPI's membership had dwindled from 90,000 in 1948 to 20,000; the AITUC's membership during the same period was down from 700,000 to 100,000.

The failure was so patent that P. C. Joshi, the ex-secretary of the Communist Party, did not hesitate to circulate a pamphlet called *Views* in which he violently accused Ranadive's leadership of wrecking the party. But Ranadive was so sure that he was following the right course that he boldly attacked Mao Tse-tung while opposing the "right deviation" trend of the Andhra Communists inside the CPI. He stated peremptorily: "Some of Mao's formulations are such that no communist can accept them. They are in contradiction to the world understanding of the Communist Parties. . . . Why do the Chinese have to go through the protracted civil war? Just because the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party at times failed to fight for the hegemony of the proletariat . . ." and so on, concluding in a violent attack on Mao's "horrible and reactionary" theories which, in his opinion, could not make the slightest contribution to the struggles of Indian Communism.[10]

The audacity of the leader of a bankrupt Indian Communist Party in attacking the surprisingly successful leader of a triumphant Chinese Communist Party is remarkable. But, as it was bound to, it was promptly followed by a strong although discreet reproof by the Communist Party of Great Britain. Both in Britain and in Moscow, it was clearly realized that the CPI was reaching a state of crisis of extreme gravity and that steps should be promptly taken to alter its disastrous course. And, with slightly veiled arrogance, Liu Shaochi asserted in the name of Chinese Communism: "The path taken by the Chinese people . . . is the path that should be taken by the people of many colonial and dependent countries in their struggle for national independence and People's Democracy."[11] And, drawing on Red Chinese experience, he proceeded to outline the policy required of the Indian Communist Party. The Cominform intervened, castigated the errors of the CPI and its tremendous lag in the face of great Communist successes in other parts of Asia. And in spite of recantations and acknowledgments of past mistakes, Ranadive was thrown out as leader.

Rajeshwar Rao, head of the Andhra branch of the Communist Party, took over from Ranadive, now accused of having been the "initiator, executor and dogged defender of the Trotsky-Tito type of left-sectarian political line."[12] And in June, 1951, in one of those typical moods of political introspection, the Politbureau issued a policy statement which, indirectly, acknowledged the fact that Indian Communism could not help being specifically Indian in its

psychological reactions: "The tradition of our party, especially since the 'People's War' period, has been to swing like a pendulum from one extreme to another. . . . We woke up suddenly like Rip Van Winkle at the end of 1947 to jump into left sectarianism which has brought the Party and the mass movement to the present plight of total disruption."[13] This lack of moderation and balance, springing from an atavistic inability to grasp the historial aspect of any movement, is typical of all specifically Indian developments throughout history. Like Gandhi, the Communist Party of India seemed to operate in series of disconnected *presents*, swinging wildly from one policy to its opposite and back again.

Having now more or less fallen under the spell of Chinese Communism and of Mao Tse-tung's concepts, the CPI decided to give up the outdated classical form of Communist struggle, that is, political strikes, riots and armed uprising of the urban proletariat. It decided to switch to the armed struggle of the peasantry and guerrilla warfare after the fashion of China's Mao—even though they had failed in their first attempt in 1948–1949. The main tool for this undertaking would no longer be the trades unions or urban political groups but the peasant All-India Kisan Sabha. Party workers and organizations were instructed to concentrate their efforts on geopolitically difficult terrain—forests and mountain areas far removed from railroads and modern means of communication, suitable bases for future guerrilla warfare. Of course, none of the other elements were to be neglected, but the main effort was to be applied to the dissatisfied rural populations. To crown it all, a formal apology was conveyed by the Indian Politbureau to Mao Tse-tung for the slanderous criticisms leveled at him in the recent past.

Rajeshwar Rao failed as utterly as Ranadive before him. The Indian peasantry was no more disposed to fight under the Marxist banner than the urban proletariat had been. Except in a few small areas in Assam and Manipur, there were no more Telenganas left to exploit. And the crisis within the CPI worsened. Defections of valuable elements, depletion of financial resources and disorganization began to grind down the elaborate Communist machinery and demoralized many faithful members. Alarmed, the British Communists intervened again and advised their Indian coreligionists that it was totally unrealistic to expect guerrilla warfare on the Chinese pattern since conditions were entirely different in the two countries. Unimaginative in the extreme, devoid of initiative, the Indian lead-

ers now sought to apply blindly and mechanically the Maoist strategy, which some of them had denounced a short while before as completely contrary to the spirit of Communism. Prodded by the criticisms of the British Communists, the CPI decided at last to call a meeting of the Central Committee in December, 1950. Organizational and other changes suggested by the British were adopted. But no new leadership developed because of the bitter rivalry between Rao, Joshi, Ranadive and Dange, and the even balance of their respective followers. No new line of action appeared. The only recourse left was to ask for advice and instructions from non-Indian sources, that is from the international Communist apparatus. This abject dependence on foreign sources of Communist authority stands in sharp contrast with the arrogant self-reliance which has always marked Mao Tse-tung's Chinese Communism and brings out in bold relief the fundamental weakness of Indian Communism.

Accordingly, four of the main Indian Communist leaders, representing the major conflicting trends inside the CPI, went to Moscow on pilgrimage and returned early in 1951 with a highly secret document known as the "Tactical Line." This tactical line document asserted once again that an armed revolution was ultimately necessary for the triumph of Communism in India, that every available element (peasants, workers and trades unions, the middle classes, the intellectuals and students) should be used to all possible extent, separately or in combination with each other. A detailed program of action, carefully worked out in Moscow, was the required blueprint for a new Communist offensive in India. And most important of all, a generous supply of financial aid began to flow through devious channels into the treasury of the party and gave it the means with which to fight in the forthcoming general elections.

The Communists decided to enter the campaign for the general elections in 1952 and adopted a suitable statement of policy: land reform, although mild since the Communists were reluctant to alienate the rich peasants; confiscation of all foreign-owned industry and banks but a conciliatory attitude toward native capitalists and industrialists (as in China); reorganization of the various states on a linguistic base.

On the latter point, the Communists went much further than Congress since they claimed that India is a *multinational* state like the USSR, and that each linguistic group (and any other separate

group) is a distinct nationality and that nationhood entails the right
to secession and complete independence from the main body, if and
when it so chooses. It was on this basis that the Communists had
upheld the Muslim claim to Pakistan; and the more Congress, con-
scious of the developing centrifugal forces, displayed its reluctance to
proceed with the formation of linguistic states, the more the Com-
munists favored it. In a striking analysis of the Indian Communist
position on the problem, A. M. Dyakov, the foremost Soviet expert
on India, made the claim that "it is only the Communist Party of
India which has put forward the slogan of a consistently democratic
solution of the national question, i.e. the right of all the nationalities
of India to self-determination, including the right to secession and
the formation of independent States."[14] Obviously, the possible frag-
mentation of India does not frighten the Marxists.

The Indian Communists, for all their failures on their own soil
in recent years, were obviously bolstered by the great triumphs that
international Communism had been winning in Europe and China.
Not the least of those was the awesome appearance of Red Chinese
troops on the Tibetan border of the Himalayas toward the end of
1950 and the inevitable intimidation that was bound to follow. Also,
they rode high on all international issues connected with the Cold
War and were now fully backed by most non-Communist Indians.
Vast financial resources streaming in from unknown sources and a
superb organization were instrumental in their achieving local suc-
cesses. Furthermore, they were able to form local coalitions with
numerous small leftist or separatist parties; some of these electoral
blocs enabled them to concentrate on a few promising districts in-
stead of frittering away their resources on a larger number. Their
great, if limited, success in the triumph of the United Progressive
Bloc in Travancore-Cochin (future Kerala) was one of the results.
The only major leftist party that refused to ally itself with the Com-
munists was the Socialist Party—it had been burnt once and did not
wish to renew the experiment of the late 1930's.

The shrewd electoral policy of the Reds paid off handsomely. Al-
though polling less than 5 per cent of the votes against more than
10 per cent for the Socialists, they won twice as many seats in the
Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) as the latter. Success was
most outstanding in South India, where they skillfully exploited all
local issues. Analyzing this unhoped-for success, the CPI Central
Committee pointed out that the Communists had done well in some

specific rural areas where they exploited local grievances, and done poorly in industrial areas; this, of course, is reminiscent of the Chinese Communist movement. As a face-saving device to protect Marxist orthodoxy, it added however that the CPI "cannot become a national political force without becoming the major political force . . . in the working classes of these cities."[15] The Central Committee also noticed that part of the success was due to the appeal to the "national" factor, that is to the growing sentiment in favor of linguistic autonomy. Not the least element in their success was the ambiguous attitude of Jawaharlal Nehru and other top Congress leaders, who were often lavish in their praise of the Soviet Union and Red China and who fought the right-wing extremists with far greater energy than the Communists. In every respect, even though they polled barely one vote out of twenty, the elections had been a boon to the CPI and helped it overcome the disasters of 1948–1951. Having failed, in spite of violence and terror, to achieve their gains through guerrilla warfare, they applied their vast resources and superb technical ability to the exploitation of the great democratic institution: free elections.

The center of gravity of Indian Communism shifted from Bombay to the south. The party headquarters was removed to Madras, and the Communist newspapers "started writing as if South India were not a part of India but a separate political unit."[16] They began to adapt their parliamentary techniques to the local situations, especially in South India, where there were no clear Congress majorities. In the Center, they cleverly used the British parliamentary forms and became unofficially the "Opposition." And while they vigorously exploited every propaganda issue, the absence of an equally vigorous reaction on the part of Jawaharlal Nehru and his government was grist to their mill.

But far more important still than these scattered parliamentary gains, the CPI had begun to make some modest inroads among the intelligentsia, influencing those elements who had been quickly disappointed by the behavior of Congress leaders in the first years of freedom. In the middle 1950's, after several years of freedom during which there had been no marked advance in economic prosperity, education, medical services, and in fact a sad deterioration of public administration and increasing corruption in high and low governmental circles, Communism began to make steady progress among the younger members of the elite, especially the students. The subtle

propaganda of the CPI was bolstered by the thundering gains of Communism in China, whose "achievements" were praised to the sky—praised not only by the Communists, but also by many Indian officials of Congress and even Prime Minister Nehru himself. The Indian Communists skillfully flattered Nehru, adroitly separated him from many an old companion of the days of the struggle for freedom. Nehru's Caesarian eminence now made him vulnerable to many forms of flattery. And an equally skillful use of some of Gandhi's former co-workers yielded rich propaganda dividends. Even Indian businessmen and capitalists were found vulnerable to the clever exploitation of their nationalistic feelings and of their antagonism toward the more powerful British and American corporations. Of all the urban workers, the white-collar workers were found to provide the easiest recruits.

But everywhere, the rapidly developing Communist strength was based far more consistently on the shrewd exploitation of local issues than on a growth of Marxist sentiment as such. A perfect example of this fact was their coming to power in Kerala state on the strength of a mere 35 per cent of the votes. They cleverly turned to good account the social and communal complexities of a very peculiar state. Roughly almost a third of the population of Kerala is Christian (mostly Roman Catholic), one-half Hindu split into a number of powerful castes and sub-castes as well as outcastes, and the rest is mostly made up of Muslim Moplahs. Furthermore, it has the distinction of being the only major area of India where a full-fledged matriarchy thrives. Last but not least, it has the highest rate of literacy (around 85 per cent), not only in India, but in the whole of Asia with the exception of Japan. Obviously, a high rate of literacy combined with great poverty is a dangerously explosive mixture. And a great deal of the 35 per cent vote that went to the Communists came from scattered Hindu communities who resented the fact that the Christians had captured leadership of the State Congress Party (much to the annoyance of Hindu Congress leaders in other parts of India). Their opponents, who polled 65 per cent of the votes, were disunited, split among Congress, the Praja Socialists and the State Muslim League, without effective leadership.

Shrewd exploitation of local issues elsewhere has also furthered their gains. In Andhra, they had stood in the forefront of the struggle for the creation of the linguistic state. In 1953, trouble cropped up in a state known as PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States

Union), where backward landlordism was responsible for the setting up of "parallel" Communist-run local administrations and village *panchāyats*. Chaos spread fast and finally compelled the central government to step in and take over the administration of the state after suspending the operation of the constitution. Another vulnerable area proved to be West Bengal, still suffering from the splitting off of East Bengal and its incorporation into East Pakistan; the city of Calcutta, especially, was one of the main targets of Communism. In other areas, rural terrorism went on sporadically—the *rathri doralu* (bosses of the night) in Telengana, for example.

Wherever they are in power, legally or illegally, the Reds can always attempt to entrench themselves so strongly that they cannot be expelled without a display of military strength. But the policy of Communist action in the 1950's still applied to the whole of India, not just the building up of local positions of strength which might wear out if they prove unable to solve some of the major social and economic problems. On an all-India scale, they still proved unable to fit their action into the over-all pattern of world Communism. The spearhead of the CPI's action after the elections of 1952, for example, was its struggle against "Anglo-American" imperialism, with special emphasis on its British component since British investments in India were still by far the largest foreign investment in India. But, as the Third Congress of the Party revealed in December, 1953, there was open conflict between Moscow's international tactical line of the moment (pro-British and anti-American) and the fundamentally more anti-British position of Indian Communism. And once again, it took all the weight and influence of Harry Pollitt, the noted British Communist, to inflect the Indian movement in the direction of greater antagonism toward the United States.

After more than forty years of existence, Indian Communism was still not a truly indigenous movement (such as Mao Tse-tung's in China). It was essentially a foreign importation, conceived in Moscow but nursed, organized and prodded along by the British Communist Party. In spite of some mild successes, it failed to make significant progress among the Indian intelligentsia because the basic features of Marxist philosophy—so congenial to the Chinese mind— are alien to the Indian mentality: its essentially historical outlook, which conflicts with the instinctively ahistorical inclination of Indian thought; its emphasis on the supremacy of a messianic end, which

contrasts with the Indian preoccupation with the means; its dogmatism, which cannot be accepted by people who have always been undogmatic and who can never grant absolute value to any contingent form or doctrine; its fundamental intolerance, which conflicts head on with the fundamental Indian insistence on freedom of thought.

True Marxists, and many non-Marxists in India and in the West as well, fail to understand the true reality of the situation because of their self-imposed blinkers. By insisting on an almost exclusively economic and materialistic interpretation of man's destiny and behavior, they fail to take into account multitudes of other factors that are just as important. The realities of the Indian situation are very different from what they conceive them to be. This was just as true in China in the 1930's and 1940's where the Communists eventually won a thundering victory, but under the leadership of a man (Mao) long considered a heretic, with social elements (the peasantry) that were excluded from political leadership by Marxist dogma, and for psychological reasons (among the Chinese intelligentsia) which they failed to diagnose because they did not consider them of any importance. If it wanted to make real headway in India, *as a purely Indian movement,* Marxism would have to undergo such tremendous modifications that it would emerge as an entirely new doctrine. The basic point, of course, is that it need not be a truly Indian movement: it could conceivably, and given certain international premises which are beyond the scope of this work, develop into a new *colonial* imposition from the Sino-Soviet bloc, if and when it becomes evident that Indian Communism is in fact a foreign importation, breeding on the exploitation of local issues, unable to solve the basic social and economic problems that are entrusted to it whenever it has legal and constitutional power and responsibility.

The purely *ideological* development of Communism in India is bound to be extremely weak, which was not the case in China. It is not so much in the small size of its membership that this fact reveals itself as in the poverty of Indian Marxist thinking and in its utter dependence on non-Indian inspiration. This, however, does not mean that Communism is no danger in India. It will still represent a growing threat in view of all the other elements in India that weaken, even if temporarily, any opposition to it: the basic situation in India, again unlike China, is that it will be a contest of weaknesses, not of strengths.

Putting aside, for a while, all external factors that are likely to

influence internal developments in India, it is clear that it is essentially on the philosophic and ideological planes that the struggle will be carried on—as it has not been, so far. The opposition to Marxism in India is fundamentally passive; it is inertia—intellectual among the elite, and social among the masses—that has, so far, limited the success of Indian Communism. But it is there, nevertheless, and temporarily conceals a far more profound reaction to come in the future.

It must be kept in mind that the leadership of Indian Communism is no more proletarian than it has ever been in Russia or China; even less so, to the dismay of the Indian Communists themselves. It is mostly drawn from the upper and middle-class intelligentsia and is highly sensitive to intellectual ideas. Such a man as E. M. S. Nambudiripad, the Communist Chief Minister of Kerala in the late 1950's, belongs to the high-ranking Nāmbudiri Brāhmin caste, which is famous for its social exclusiveness. Caste consciousness is still very much alive and still has a profound impact on politics. In Kerala, for instance, there is no love lost between the Nāmbudiris and the Nāyars, whose caste patriotism is intense, and they both detest the Christians or the Muslim Moplahs—even though the Christians and the Nāyars may join hands temporarily for the specific purpose of defending their educational institutions against Communist encroachments. The fact that revolt against the outrageous caste discriminations in South India has brought such men as Nambudiripad and thousands of others into the Communist Party does not necessarily imply that the caste system is crumbling. It is *changing,* not crumbling, and still stands as a mighty barrier—along with the tightly-knit Christian and Muslim communities—against the establishment of a monolithic state apparatus. Communism cannot easily flourish in such an atmosphere. The CPI's organization and its lower echelons face the impossible task of attempting to appeal to Indian masses still steeped in an old atavistic culture that is not hospitable to communistic ideas and sentiments.

The relative progress of Communism in India since Independence is largely due to the attitude of the Indian intelligentsia and to the policy of the Indian Government—a policy based on an outdated liberal outlook which belongs more properly to the nineteenth century than to our century. This "liberal" outlook, under the label of "neutralism" in foreign affairs and "progressiveness" in internal matters, is based on an essentially Anglo-Saxon pragmatism which

refuses to come to grips with Marxism on the intellectual and ideological plane. It hopes to defeat Communism by applying successfully its pragmatic economic and social policies in a country where this type of success is most difficult to obtain. Under Nehru's leadership, it is essentially "secular" in that it frowns on any reliance on spiritual values; it is fundamentally skeptical and refuses to put in motion for good purposes the vast reservoir of religious feelings that erupted so tragically in communal violence among Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. In that sense, it creates purposely an ideological void that invites conversion to Communism or any other totalitarian ideology; and, following in the footsteps of the Kuomintang in China, it demoralizes the non-Communist leadership of post-Independence India by affording no conceptual framework for its action. It fosters, indirectly and unconsciously, the corruption and nepotism which are the inevitable immoral by-products of a spiritual void.

Furthermore, after forty years of existence as a growing international power of the first magnitude, Communism has become more sophisticated. Gone are the days when Communist leaders inveighed against their natural enemies—Gandhi's emphasis on man's spiritual nature and the sacredness of the individual as against Marxist materialism; Gandhi's concentration on the means rather than the ends, as against the Marxists' prophetic concentration on the end. Communism, today, is willing to compromise with the forms, if not the spiritual essence. It accepts the cruder forms of Hinduism, confident that its true spirit will eventually die out. It fought Gandhi mercilessly when he was alive, and even fought his mild successor, Vinoba Bhave, for a while. In the late 1950's, however, it became shrewder and simulated a more friendly attitude toward Bhave's movement along with greater respect for Gandhi's historic role. Their jesuitic approach to India's complex problems makes them more dangerous because their opponents take Communist declarations at face value; in the background, however, the Communists still retain their fully integrated and ruthlessly consistent philosophy, while their opponents have nothing but instinctive reactions without intellectual framework; and since one cannot fight something with nothing, it is obvious that, in spite of all the tremendous psychological obstacles, Marxist ideas will go on progressing among the intelligentsia until they meet other ideas of equal representative power.

Membership in the CPI is relatively small because it appears to be more exclusive than most other Communist Parties in the world.

What confuses so many non-Communists, in India as elsewhere, is really a problem of semantics: like all other Communist Parties, the CPI is not so much a political party as a fighting *church*. Candidates for membership are put on probation and tested before being accepted. They have to steep themselves in Communist lore, learn its peculiar jargon and study its atheistic theology (dialectical materialism). Even members of the proletariat who accede to the lower echelons of the party are severely screened and only the most promising revolutionaries are accepted as members. Most of them are hard working, disciplined, fanatical and rigidly honest in their private lives. But their social background, on the whole, proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the success of Communism in Asian countries does not lie in its presumed revolutionary appeal to the downtrodden masses. Its success is primarily due to its ideological appeal to some embittered or bewildered members of the middle-class intelligentsia and to the prospects of dictatorial power extended to intelligent and educated men, all this combined with a high philosophic purpose. It appeals all at once to the spirit of sacrifice for a cause and to the hope of greater power in the future.

This is true of the CPI as of all other Communist Parties throughout the world. But to this must be added the psychological intimidation created by the very *growth* of international Communism's military power on India's doorstep and the insidious belief that time is on the Marxist side. The urge to be on the winning side is an important element of Indian psychology, and a great deal of the Nehrunian policy of "neutralism" is based on an instinctive contempt for the very weakness of the West which Indian nationalism solicited in the first place and then exploited under Gandhi's shrewd leadership. Joined with a certain suicidal tendency that has been developing within the Western world itself, this subtle bias in favor of the international policy of the Sino-Soviet bloc has indirectly favored Indian Communism itself. Many leading elements in the West experience a certain masochistic pleasure in denouncing Western values and past history, in reviling its colonial epics and anticipating the "inevitable" triumph of Western civilization's deadly enemies. Is it any wonder that they get a helping hand from India where, since the distant days of the *Mahābhārata* and of Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra,* success and strength have always been admired and worshiped?

Indian Communism has undoubtedly some assets that other political parties in India do not possess—but every one of its assets can be turned into a liability. It is part of a vast international network bolstered by an international ideology and backed by the powerful Sino-Soviet bloc. But precisely because it is backed by great foreign powers, it cannot help reminding many Indians of its colonialist undertones. And because it is an alien ideology, remote from the atavistic Hindu outlook, it cannot sink any deep roots in Indian soil as it did in Chinese soil. Indian Communism is geopolitically backed by the long common border which India shares with Chinese-occupied Tibet—but fear of *Chinese* imperialism is more likely, in the long run, to turn a vast majority of thoughtful Indians against Communism. And the very complexity of the Indian social structure, with all its built-in injustices which might superficially seem to favor Communist penetration, proves to be in fact an unassailable obstacle. With its profound cleavages, the deep-rooted caste instinct and the ever-alert color consciousness, it will defeat all attempts at streamlining the Indian body-social in an equalitarian sense—and therefore will defeat all attempts at establishing monolithic power.

In the long run, the cleverest electoral policies and the shrewdest exploitation of local issues are not going to deliver India to the Reds. Other circumstances would be required and, unfortunately, such circumstances are not unlikely to present themselves in the future— that is when Jawaharlal Nehru is no longer at the helm. The centrifugal forces that are building up in India today will, if unchecked, lead eventually to a more or less gradual weakening of the federal center. It is conceivable, then, that Pakistan, beset by its own internal problems, might seize the opportunity to strike out against northern India. Year in and year out since Independence, India and Pakistan have traded blows along their mutual borders. It would not take much of an incident to start a regular war.

The history of China might have been very different if the Japanese had not gone to war against it in 1937—such wars being the main harbingers of Communism. If war broke out between Pakistan and India, Communism would certainly benefit from the conflict. But it could hardly do so on an all-India scale because the centrifugal tendencies leading to a Balkanization of India would then be considerably accelerated. The northern Indian hostility toward Pakistan awakens hardly any echo in South India and the southerners

might then deem it propitious to break away from the union. Communism might come to power locally, in one or several states, but would then automatically generate strongly anti-Communist regimes in neighboring states. Just as the division of South and North Korea or South and North Vietnam resulted in a polarization of strong Communist and anti-Communist forces in their respective spheres, so would the rise to power of autonomous Communist regimes in some parts of India inevitably result in the rise of opposite regimes in others. This polarization can already be seen today: Communism is strongest in some parts of South India and the Bengal, with perhaps potential strength in some parts of Maharashtria. It is weakest in Hindi-speaking areas—where their most vigorous opponents, the right-wing extremists, flourish.

The over-all strength of Indian Communism lies mostly in the shrewd exploitation of local issues in specific areas, not so much in a growth of Marxist sentiment as such. On the national, all-India level, it is weak, plagued as are all other Indian parties by lack of discipline and a degree of factionalism unknown in any other Communist Party in the world. It suffers from the linguistic chaos to the same extent as all other Indian parties; most reports from the lower echelons to the Central Committee of the CPI are written in regional languages and "for obvious reasons are thus remaining in the file"[17] where nobody reads them because nobody can; the Central Committee still operates in English. Report after report complains that CPI members dislike to work at the Center, that it is difficult to get Politbureau members to exercise general authority because they prefer to work in their states or individual bailiwicks.[18] The Communist Party in India is not a monolithic organization but a conglomeration of parties united only by tenuous bonds, suffering from the same fissiparous tendencies which plague all other political organisms in India—yet still powerful because it strives desperately to overcome these deficiencies.

In the last resort, the strongest, indeed almost unassailable barrier against the progress of Communism in India is the inert but formidable power of atavistic Hinduism. In self-protection against the threat of materialistic Marxism, Hinduism would automatically generate its own counter-poison—a tidal wave of right-wing extremism.

Today and Tomorrow

AS ONE comes closer to the present, one tends to lose sight of the forest and see only multitudes of individual trees. A constant effort must be made to extricate oneself from the day-to-day involvements and look at the problem of India from the great perspective which its immense past affords.

India is not merely an economically underdeveloped country; it is not just another Africa or Latin America. It is a very old civilization, ailing but still remarkably alive today. And it is from the depths of that old civilization that India is most likely to draw the strength needed to adapt itself to the modern world. It was from the depths of that old civilization that the powerful Dayānanda Sarasvatī sprang in the nineteenth century to shake the old, decrepit structure of a fossilized Hinduism to its foundations and start the Ārya-Samāj on its brilliant career in northern India. It was from those depths that the *shuddi* movement aiming at the reconversion of Muslims back to Hinduism sprang, that Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the great Bengali thinker and novelist, extracted his collectivism and religious revivalism and Sri Aurobindo Ghose his mystical nationalism. It was from the same depths that Bāl Gangādhar Tilak arose at the turn of the century to give further impetus to a Hindu political revival—and it was undoubtedly as the spiritual heir to Tilak that the Hindu Mahasabha was founded in 1928, a militant organization dedicated to a cultural and political revival of old Hindu India, temporarily sidetracked, in its opinion, by Gandhi's debilitating non-violence.

Under the aggressive leadership of V. D. Savarkar, Dr. Moonjee and Pandit Malaviya, it paid little attention to communism, then an insignificant movement in India, and turned violently against the Muslim communities. Instrumental in fanning to the utmost all the communal controversies, it had to watch with impotent rage the

development of the Muslim League and the eventual Partition of India. It generated its own para-military organization of militant Hindu youth, the redoubtable Rashtriya Swayam Sevaka Sangh, and refused to accept Partition and the existence of an independent state of Pakistan. Indirectly, it became responsible for the murder of Gandhi by the fanatical, unrepentant Vinayak Godse, and sentiment ran so high against the Hindu Mahasabha that it was compelled to withdraw from politics altogether.

Gradually, the Mahasabha fell behind the times and began to lose all influence on the course of events. Its staunch communalism became outdated and the rising threat of communism compelled a new orientation of the movement. This was clearly perceived by its new leader, the brilliant Shyama Prasad Mookerjee; a new incarnation was needed, a new inflection in the direction of the movement in an independent India shorn of Pakistan but with forty million Muslim citizens who had to be won over, if possible, to this new crusade. On October 21, 1951, Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian People's Party) as a modernized offshoot of the Mahasabha —a new political party, no longer communal but open to all Indians regardless of caste, creed or community. In tune with the prevailing conditions in India, its aim was stated to be the development of Indian "unity in diversity which has been the keynote of Bharat's [India's] culture and civilization," in Mookerjee's own words. Castigating Nehru for taking "special delight in outraging Hindu feelings and sentiments," he left no doubt as to the orientation of the new party. Claiming that the partition of India "was a tragic folly," he left no doubt either as to its incradicable hostility to Pakistan.[1]

The mysterious death of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee in 1953 was a hard blow to the Jana Sangh, yet failed to prevent it from growing and expanding. Its center of strength lay in the Hindi-speaking areas of northern India (where Communism is weakest) and its influence fades away gradually toward the Deccan and South India. Soon rated among the four all-India political parties, it began to be heard with increasing frequency and violence in and out of Parliament— directing many of its shafts at the Caesarian nature of Nehru's power and at the monopolistic character of the Congress Party's rule. Handicapped all through the 1950's by a crippling lack of financial resources, its small achievements look all the more impressive when viewed against the background of the irresistible financial power of both the Congress Party and the CPI. And nothing is quite so

fickle as financial backing for political parties. As soon as the heavy backing of the Congress Party by a large segment of the business community (which gets it back many times through corruption of officials, tax evasion and non-implementation of leftist policies) switches to some outspokenly right-wing party, Congress is likely to disintegrate and large numbers of Congressmen would join right-wing extremism, where they truly belong.

A party such as the Jana Sangh may not carry too much weight under Nehru's Caesarian rule; but it represents a nucleus with tremendous potential in northern India. Its economic policies are not particularly original and come close to a certain form of mild conservatism, tempered by a definite hostility toward great concentration of industrial and financial power in private hands—and a certain inclination toward Gandhi's economic views. But its potential as leader of right-wing extremism is considerable, insofar as it might become the political expression of Hinduism's enduring ethos. This atavistic Hinduism is still alive today and is likely to benefit directly from any major political upheaval that would pulverize the present Westernized structure of a united India. British influence on social, legal and political matters has been wearing thin ever since Independence. And if there is to be any heir to it, in a great part of India, it will be some expression of Hinduism's traditional outlook. Bolstered by the fanatical Rashtriya Swayam Sevaka Sangh, which commanded a highly disciplined membership of 400,000 and several million direct supporters in the 1950's, it represents the most potent expression of militant Hinduism[2]—this immensely strong and durable Hinduism which could still send over five million devotees to the great *kumbha-melā* at Allahabad in 1954 and still has at its disposal untold reserves of fanaticism and emotionalism, as well as genuine spiritual strength.

Certainly, without intellectual framework, it cannot become a dynamic antagonist of Marxism and, so far, has not come to grips with its most dangerous enemy. It still fights, purely instinctively, the only enemy of which it is really aware and with which it is familiar: Islam—that is, in its modern political expression, Pakistan. Incarnate at present in the Jana Sangh, it attempts to fight the centrifugal forces that have been building up relentlessly, conscious of their danger for the unity of what it calls Bharatmata, "Mother India." It wants to solve the problem of India's unity through a reintegration of Pakistan within the Indian fold and maximum decentraliza-

tion. It sees a solution to the problem of India's linguistic unity in the adoption, not of Hindi but of Sanskrit—a dead language—as the national tongue of India in place of English. There is in all this, as in many things Indian, a strange blend of utter realism and dreamy wishful thinking. And even with a fairly complete political, social and economic program, it offers yet no dynamic ideology, no articulate philosophy, no consistent doctrine; it is merely an embryo with great potential. But contrasted with the Communist leaders, who at the national level strike one as being to an extent divorced from many of the realities of Indian life—especially in northern India—and who seem strangely brittle, the Jana Sangh leaders exude a certain elemental power which seems to spring directly from the Indo-Gangetic earth.

The strength of Hindu right-wing extremism does not lie among the Brāhmins, especially those numerous Brāhmin groups who have become successfully Westernized, who speak English and have benefited from the new political, social and economic order of India's modern industrial structure. It lies mostly in the non-English-speaking middle and lower castes who remain rooted in the old pre-industrial order, and who remain faithful to the old Hindu civilization, dedicated to "Sanskritization" as opposed to Westernization.[3] It is this old Hindu, not the new Westernized "bourgeoisie" that is likely to swing increasingly toward some form of right-wing extremism. The Indian revolution has barely started, as yet. Independence left things pretty much as they had been in the first half of our century: the British engaged in private business are more numerous in India than ever before, and they still own 80 per cent of all foreign investments in India. They have transmitted political power to the small English-speaking, Western-oriented ruling class, which numbers barely 1 per cent of the Indian population. But a violent antagonism is already growing in all political parties against the English-speaking "Neo-Brāhmins"[4] who took over from the British and who perpetuate, in spite of parliamentary trappings, the same type of rule. It is against this enduring but weakening Westernized structure that right-wing extremism is likely to strike in the future, and thus undercut Communism: that is where its revolutionary potential lies. The similarities with the social background of Germany's National Socialism—middle classes impoverished by the First World War and its aftermath—are obvious.

Whatever the fate of this or that political party, there are certain constants in the Indian situation. Regardless of who gives shape to it and leads it, the rise of right-wing extremism seems almost inevitable in the future, especially in some areas of northern India (Hindustan, the Hindi-speaking areas). A perspective of Indian history, and especially of the cultural impact of India on nineteenth-century Germany, brings out very clearly the great similarities existing between the German and the Hindu *Weltanschauungs*, in their timeless aspects. They are both prone, when politically conscious and active, to be extremists, especially right-wing extremists. They are both essentially caste people, conscious of ethnic and class distinctions. They have no feeling of world brotherhood, of love of mankind as a whole. Marxism-Leninism could serve as a vehicle for the greatest reactionary movement in modern China because of the many traditional cultural and psychological elements it could incorporate; it can do no such thing in India because it awakens no echo in the Indian ethos, because it can develop no organic relationship with the soul of India. Rather than Communism, it is some form of National Socialism that appeals to the more dynamic Indians (without the ghastly undertones of the Hitlerian regime) or some form of Fascism in some particular areas (the D.M.K. or Black Shirts of Madras, for example); and the spirit of Subhas Bose, the former rival of Nehru and the Fascist revolutionary who worked hand in glove with the Japanese during the Second World War, still haunts Bengal.

Another important constant in India is the inveterate lack of interest in politics. India as a whole became briefly interested and involved in politics in the first half of the twentieth century when the first cracks appeared in the grandiose structure of the British Empire. But after the struggle for independence was over and the Indian nationalists remained masters of the battlefield, political consciousness began to wane steadily. Especially among the younger generation, it declined steadily all through the 1950's until now most students are considered to be decidedly apolitical. The atavistic inclination to leave politics, and every other occupation as well, to the "professional," endures in India. With this goes an equally enduring distrust of the state and of rulers in general; thanks to its ethical aura, the Chinese state was always granted the benefit of the doubt; the Indian state never enjoyed this privilege and, at best, was always

considered to be an inevitable evil. The Indian masses can still be moved, but only for matters that concern them locally and directly or for religious motives. And they will only give their heart-felt allegiance to that party and ideology that appear to be a true emanation, more or less modernized no doubt, of some aspect or other of timeless Hinduism—religious, social or economic. It was Gandhism yesterday because that particular emanation of Hinduism seemed best adapted to the immediate task at hand: ousting the British Raj. Tomorrow, it is likely to be another emanation—authoritarian right-wing extremism—that will be better suited to the tasks looming on the political horizon: the defense against Pakistan and against Communism. Along with a healthy respect for strength, the Indians have a compelling admiration for social hierarchy and an enduring feeling for caste distinctions—which is not at all incompatible with temporary and violent revolts against it, as in South India and Maharashtria. The most ruthless form of Communist rule would find itself, ultimately, powerless to streamline Indian society and overcome the fantastic gaps created by class and ethnic distinctions: ultimately, it would be defeated by it—unless backed by such overwhelming alien forces of occupation that the Indians could not physically expel it. Right-wing extremism would not fight such profound atavism but marry it and become its political expression; it would be the true political expression of the immemorial ethos of Hindu India.

Marxism awakens no true echo in the soul of India; but some form of Nietzschean philosophy does. Looking beyond the world of day-to-day politics to the more or less distant age when mankind will truly become one, one can see clearly that India's contribution to world culture will lie in the development and concrete application of some such philosophy. While Red China seeks the reduction of the human individual to the level of a mechanized ant, India will possibly seek or at least contribute to create the "superman." Such a pursuit was already brilliantly anticipated by the great mystic-philosopher Sri Aurobindo Ghose in several of his works, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* especially.[5] In this idealistic Nietzscheism, Aurobindo applies the Hindu genius for the elaboration of essentially *subjective* philosophies of transformation to the problem facing a modern man who is technically master of his natural environment: not so much the alteration of his political, social and economic structures as the metamorphosis of his human per-

sonality, which alone can afford a lasting solution of mankind's problems. He conjured out of the depths of his mystical awareness a strange vision of the superman of the future, evolving out of the imperfect human being of today as man, hundreds of thousands of years ago, evolved out of the animal kingdom.[6] Blazing new yogic trails, he prophesied that "the spiritual motive will be in the future of India, as in her past, the real originative and dominating strain."[7] And Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan anticipates in a similar vein when he writes: "In each geological period have appeared creatures which might have been represented as the highest types of creation. Yet those forms of life have been superseded by others. The next stage of evolution is not in man's physique but in his psyche. . . ."[8] The Indian mind is instinctively more at home in the vast space of geological ages than in the narrow confines of historical epochs. It can conceive and would welcome some staggering event that would put an end to history altogether and usher the world into a new geological age—something, in fact, that might very well be happening today. It could then conceive of the preordained emergence of supermen, a new species evolving out of a vast mass of socialized mankind that would remain as stuck in the grooves of the crystallized routine and paltry comforts of a *panem et circenses* type of civilization as bees and ants have remained in their socialized mode of life for aeons.

India can contribute to the world of the future, not only out of its immemorial past but also out of its living present, because the essence of Indian philosophy does not lie so much in abstract thought as in actual "living"—and even though Indian thought does not admit it consciously, in "becoming," in the preservation of self-identity in the midst of metamorphosis according to Goethe's motto: *Stirb und werde,* "die and become." The psychological and cultural background of the Indian intellectual is fundamentally religious, even when formal religion has lost its grip. This spiritual and religious ethos of India is less vulnerable to scientific criticism than the Western creeds (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) because it is not connected with history—because the spiritual symbolism of history has no meaning for it. Its very limitations, its emphasis on psychology rather than theology, on the inner man rather than on man's relations with the external universe, shields it from the corrosive impact of our modern times. When the essence of Hindu religiosity has been distilled, what is left is basically a vague but powerful awareness of *monism*—that ecstatic feeling being "oned" with all things, seen

and unseen. History, as we know, teaches us that this outlook, so predominant in India, tends to fragment and dilute morality as understood in other civilizations. Under these circumstances, morality was in India, as it still is largely today, a relative thing, tied specifically to one's station in life and one's caste, indistinguishable from the vast pattern of taboos embedded in the caste system. Morality does not have the powerful appeal in India that it has in China; corruption does not revolt the Indian soul as it does the Chinese. More than anything else, this absence of emphasis on morality may justify a certain cynical ruthlessness in political matters which would make short shrift of all legal and democratic safeguards.

The India of the future is not likely to resemble Gandhi's idealized version of it; hammered into new shape by the hard blows of political realities from which it was shielded by the British Raj, the enduring remains of India's civilization are likely to slough off the cloak of Gandhian moralism which it had adopted instinctively as the best means of defeating the British—the self-doubting West of the postwar era being in the throes of an acute moral crisis and therefore sensitive to all forms of moral criticism. The India of the future is far more likely to revert to the world outlook expounded in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Arthasāstra,* where naked realism prevails, where strength (spiritual as well as mental or material) is equated with goodness and truth is viewed as more subjective than objective.

An anticipation of internal developments in the India of the future must not make us forget that India is not an isolated world of its own but is inexorably involved in the present history-in-the-making of this planet. Many of the events that took place in India during the nineteenth and early twentieth century were mere reflections of the momentous metamorphosis revolutionizing the West: the final exhaustion and winding-up of European Culture and the rise of American Civilization. All the immense labor of the so-called "synthesis" of the nineteenth century was largely for nothing; its results lie in ruins today, alongside the crystallizing remains of the great European Culture that can generate no more. The type of Western influence exerting itself on India in the second half of the twentieth century is fundamentally different from its predecessor: it calls for no cultural synthesis since its cultural component is negligible. It has a profound impact on the economic life of India and on the tech-

niques required to sustain that life; but it is perfectly compatible with a scrapping of all the cultural, political, social and legal elements and institutions dear to Europe which two centuries of close British connection had introduced in India.

The fact that this scrapping is not likely to be carried out by Communism, at least single-handedly, is small consolation. The irony, however, is that most of the responsibility for this potential development will lie with the West—mostly in the hands of those naïve Westerners who awoke with a start, not too long ago, when they realized that world Communism, allied with Soviet and Red Chinese imperialism, was a deadly menace to our civilization. The need to establish a steely ring of military bastions around the periphery of the great Eurasian land mass imposed itself on the dominant Western power: the United States of America. And as fast as the British Raj pulled out of India, American influence began its penetration. Blunted in India proper by the testy "neutralism" of the Nehrunian regime, American influence fastened itself onto Pakistan and built up its military power. Instead of isolating the entire Indian subcontinent from the icy blasts of the Cold War, helping it economically and fostering a peaceful co-operation between its component nations, the West chose to aggravate the existing tensions and, indirectly, hasten the gradual wearing-out of the liberal, democratic and legalistic structure so painfully built up over a period of many generations. Not knowing where it is really going, guided only by short-term policies, the West is gradually contributing to destroying the institutions it had implanted in the Orient. The existence of parliamentary democracy in India, however imperfect, and the authority and influence of the small English-speaking ruling class in India, are the West's most precious assets in the Orient. To undermine them with ill-thought-out, hastily improvised policy stop-gaps is nothing short of madness. It takes time to destroy as to build; and while the subterranean process of destruction goes on, the innumerable cliché producers will assure the world that all is fine and democracy is progressing.

One by one in the 1950's, the flimsy democratic structures erected in the Middle East, Pakistan and Southeast Asia collapsed. India, the oldest by far of all the ex-colonies, still stands because the old democratic and liberal momentum inherited from the pre-Independence past is far greater. But at the present rate of erosion, it should not be expected to last very long. What happens next is in the lap

of the gods. If the pressure of power politics throughout the world warrants it, India will become, like the Middle East since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and like the geographical rim of the Eurasian land mass, a political battleground between conflicting world powers. India would become a mere chessboard. And in India itself the conflict would take place between the political expression of Hinduism (right-wing extremism) and Marxism over the dying body of the Westernized, English-speaking all-Indian ruling class that took over from the British Raj in 1947. India would break up into a number of separate states and become Balkanized. A temporary military dictatorship could delay but not prevent the inevitable.

However, if a sudden and unexpected flash of wisdom struck the West in time, a new policy more consistent with long-term goals could be devised—such a policy as would aim at the preservation of peace in the whole area, at the integrity of India's unity and democratic institutions, along with a truly massive effort at economic betterment for which the West has ample resources. If the recent history of China's tragedy teaches us anything, it is that only long-term policies that are based on a profound analysis of reality and are consonant with the specific character of a given people can shape the future as we would like it shaped.

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16. Masani, *op. cit.,* p. 165.
17. Overstreet, *op. cit.,* p. 343.
18. *Ibid.,* pp. 347-48.

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1. Presidential Address of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee at the Opening Convention of the Akhil Bharatiya Jana Sangh.
2. *Quest* (Bombay), October-December, 1958, p. 31.
3. Park, *Leadership and Political Institutions in India,* p. 21.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 165.
5. Diwakar, *Mahayogi,* p. 107.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 178.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 263.
8. Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Society,* p. 18.

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This is a rudimentary bibliography. I have merely listed those works which I have quoted directly or on which I have relied heavily. Most of them carry extensive bibliographies of their own which make it unnecessary to extend this short list.

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